■ Entertainment
Advertisers pull out of 'offensive' talk shows

■ Lifestyle
The last word from John Paul the Great

■ Across/A17
6 NPA rebels, 2 cops slain in Bulacan

■ Sports
Pistons grab playoff head start

■ Business/B1
SEC urged to probe Pacific Plans' books

Malacañang blows hot and cold on pay hike

By Cl C. Cabanergan Jr.

THAT has good news. There will be a wage increase.

Then that follows. But not soon.

Malacañang assured its

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

77 Mangyan couples join mass wedding

By Martin D. Salazar

SEVENTY-SEVEN couples from the Mangyan Tadyahol tribal group walked down the aisle in unison Saturday, in groups of three-ing Tagalog—and were wed in a civil ceremony on Friday at the municipal park of Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro.

Monday, April 25, 2005 ● 92 pages / Vol. 29 / no. 136

DFA official strangled by robbers

3 men break into Makati home

By Dave V. Quintanilla

EARLY morning at exactly, Filipino diplomat Alicia Ramos' younger sister, Letticia, would open the door of their house in Makati City to sweep their front yard.

Little did Letticia know that when she unlocked the front door at 5:30 a.m. yesterday three hooded men were lurking outside.

Apparently robbers, they pounced on her, gagged and tied her up, then proceeded to the second floor of the house and—using a white towel—strangled Alicia, a 64-year-old foreign affairs assistant secretary, police said.

A seemingly quiet morning routine in the lives of the two unmarried sisters had turned into a violent tragedy that caused shock in diplomatic quarters.

The Ramoses lived alone together in a two-storey house at 5922 Boyle St., Barangay Palanan in Makati.

ASSISTANT Foreign Secretary Alicia Ramos: Her violent death in the hands of three hooded intruders shocks the foreign community

'A brilliant, efficient and quiet diplomat'

By Nikko Dizon and PDI Research

IT JUST wasn't the kind of farewell that friends and colleagues of Alicia Ramos would want to remember.

Ramos, who had spent half her life at the Department of Foreign Affairs and was undersecretary for Asia and Pacific Affairs, was set to retire next year.

But instead of warm, in her honor, the entire department and members of the diplomatic community rushed up to mourning her violent death in their Makati home.

Described by her colleagues as a quiet person, Ramos found herself in a diplomatic classic in 1995 when she was the country's top diplomat in Singapore.

The tempest was triggered by the execution of noted Filipino-Canadian for the murder of her 4-year-old Singaporean ward and another Filipino friend, Delia Maga.

The executed was hotly controversial process following allegations that Ramos and other country officials had failed to give the necessary assistance to the most senior elite was being tried in court.

The controversy led to Ramos' recall home.

Her killing yesterday caused outrage in diplomatic circles.

"She was very brilliant, hardworking, efficient and quiet. We regret the untimely death of Undersecretary Ramos," Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Rodolfo Severino said in a phone interview.

Severino, the acting secretary while Secretary Alberto Romulo is abroad, said he rushed to his colleague's

POLICE officials bar journalists from entering the scene of the crime—the two-storey house at 5922 Boyle St., Barangay Palanan, Makati City.

POPE Benedict XVI waves after receiving the insignia of papal office—a wooden pallium or shawl and the Fisherman's Ring—before celebrating his first Mass in St. Peter's Square.

'Jueteng' trio dictate on PNP posts?

By Luige B. del Puerco

THREE relatives of a top government official have been dictating who will get the top police posts as payment for with huge jueteng payola, according to a ranking police official.

In exchange, they get a substantial cut of whatever the police officials get as payoffs from the illegal numbers game.

"They're the influence peddlers. They get you a post, you give them a cut in your jueteng take," the police official told the Inquirer, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"The difference now," he said, "is that these three persons get both from the police officials and from the jueteng operators. That's how greedy they are."

In just one region in Luzon, they get a total of P2 million a

Assault on activists alarms CHR

By Norman Bordadora

(First of two parts)

THE COMMISSION on Human Rights (CHR) has expressed alarm over the "seemingly systematic" assault on left-leaning activists over the past few months.

SPECIAL REPORT

Since the start of the year, at least 20 leaders and members of militant groups have been killed across the country by armed men suspected of having links with the military.

"[The spate of killings] seems to be systematic. Those being killed are all members of Bayan Muna [and their allies]," CHR Commissioner Dominador Cayanda II said in an interview.

The commission will take up the killings of leftist leaders today in meeting, he said.

"Some killed were either members of party-list groups, such as Bayan Muna and anakpawis, people's organizations such as Bagong Alyansang

Pope Benedict XVI formally begins Church stewardship

VATICAN CITY—Pope Benedict XVI formally began his stewardship of the Roman Catholic Church on Sunday, reaching out to Jews, other Christians and "nonbelievers alike," and asking for prayers from the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and dignitaries gathered in St. Peter's Square to witness "this enormous task."

The former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who was known to his iron hand within the Church orthodoxy, made clear in his installation homily that as pope, he would focus most of his attention on the well-off lead in governing the world's 1.1 billion Catholics.

"My real program of government is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by Him so that He himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history," he said in his homily read in Italian.

Wearing golden vestments and shedding his peasant's garb, Pope Benedict began the ceremony by leading a procession into the area under St. Peter's Basilica where St. Peter is believed to be buried, paying homage to the first pope and blessing the tomb with incense on a chain censer.

He ended the three-hour ceremony by riding through the crowds in a white open-topped vehicle surrounded by guards on platforms. The cardinal reached out to him and received pictures of him as Delle sang.

In one of the most symbolic moments of the Mass, Pope Benedict was given his Fisherman's Ring and a woolen pallium or shawl—both symbols of his papal authority.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2002

Second FRONTPAGE

Open your books, Palace tells oil firms

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Norman Bordadora and Philip C. Tubeza

MALACAÑANG wants the big oil companies to be transparent and open their books to the public to erase suspicions that they are operating as a cartel and colluding with one another to manipulate the pump prices of their petroleum products.

"I think it is only proper for oil companies to open their books to avoid being accused of operating as a cartel. We all know that oil companies, particularly those with huge supplies, will always be accused as being a cartel if they are not transparent," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a radio interview.

Bunye urged five oil companies to disclose the assumptions and formula that they use in determining the prices of their petroleum products.

"What is important is to have transparency. We can only know if their assumptions and computations in pricing their products are right if they open their books," Bunye said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo earlier ordered the Department of Energy to investigate whether domestic oil players were engaged in illicit market practices to deliver pump prices and prop up their profits.

The President was alarmed by the continued rise in oil prices by between 50 centavos and 75 centavos per liter every week since last month even though oil prices in the world market had stabilized.

The President also urged the public to patronize Petron Corp., which is 40 percent owned by the government, which has not raised its pump prices since last week unlike its chief rivals Pilipinas Shell and Caltex Philippines.

Sen. Manuel Roxas II claimed that the government had enough powers under Republic Act No. 8479, or the Oil Deregulation Law of 1998, to crash down on oil companies for their abusive market practices and that it need not wait for amendments to the law before putting the oil companies in line.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. noted that the spate of oil price increases was artificial after Petron opted not to increase its pump prices by 75 centavos per liter.

Addressing a breakfast forum in Quezon City, Pimentel said the senior oil price increases were not dictated by market forces but artificially made up by the oil companies to the country.

"World oil production is rising. So reasons why prices have should go up," Pimentel said.

Pimentel cited Petron's decision not to increase its prices while other oil companies raised theirs.

Gov. Isabel Sanal, Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco urged the repeal of the oil deregulation law.

Cuenco said the increased surge in oil prices had constituted "fraud" on the public in the House of Representatives of the need to regulate the oil industry again.

"Right now, consumers are completely under the mercy of the oil companies. We must not allow them to bleed us dry. The price of oil must be regulated," Cuenco said in an interview.

He said the successive increases in oil prices showed that the law was "not really working to prevent unreasonable pricing in the domestic market."

EO on ID trial balloon, says Bunye

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

JUST a trial balloon—the real thing is yet to come.

Malacañang yesterday signified its determination to push through with a national identification system by saying that implementation of Executive Order No. 420 was only a preliminary step toward its grand goal of imposing a much broader ID plan.

"It's a test project or pilot project that if successful will make it easier for us to make it into law on a national scale...if that is what is needed," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye of EO 420 in an interview over radio station DZRH.

EO 420 seeks to unify into a single card all the IDs issued by state agencies and public corporations, such as regulatory bodies and pension fund organizations like the Social Security System and the Government Service Insurance System. The resulting ID will have a reference number aimed at facilitating access to basic information regarding the holder.

Bunye said the National Economic and Development Authority, tasked with putting EO 420 into effect, would draft the implementing rules and regulations for the unified government ID. But local government units (LGUs), he said, could also proceed with their own plans to adopt their own ID systems as mandated by Maharlika last month.

"These are not mutually exclusive moves. The EO covers only government agencies under the executive branch while LGUs, with their autonomy and legislative power, can implement an ID system in their respective jurisdictions," Bunye said.

Malacañang's move to create a single national ID system has sparked a storm of protest from leftist groups and the political opposition who branded it an unconstitutional intrusion of individual privacy.

Since President Macapagal-Arroyo signed EO 420 on April 11, Malacañang has pushed the project as a means of facilitating government and commercial transactions rather than as an anniversary tool, apparently in hopes of softening public opposition.

A survey showed that most Filipinos support a national ID system as an instrument to single out terrorists, but critics said it could be abused by allowing the administration to go one step after another of the state's foes in political enemies.

"The ID is very simple. There is a lot of information spread all over different agencies and we are just integrating this information into a more efficient ID system," Bunye said. "We are only getting information that is already available and it is just a question of making it convenient."

RP-based group wins P1.7B in British lotto

LONDON—A global lottery syndicate based in the Philippines was the winner of a 16.6 million-pound (P1.735billion) British lotto jackpot, The Sunday Times newspaper reported.

Overseas Subscription Agents (OSE), which plays European and US lotteries on behalf of members worldwide, had bought up to 14,000 tickets for the Jan. 2 draw, the fifth biggest in British lotto history.

The tickets were purchased on behalf of 6,846 by a retired photo technologist, Bill Jackson, to get around a rule that restricts the National Lottery to residents of Britain and visitors to the country.

The winnings were first packed in a British bank account, gaining interest from each. Jackson was given 48,000 pounds (P5 million) for his efforts. One transferred to a secret bank account in Liechtenstein, The Sunday Times said.

The size of the bank transfer was so great that the National Criminal Intelligence Service, the British police agency that specializes in organized crime, went to Scotland to question Jackson, the newspaper said.

Camelot, which operates the National Lottery, said that while it disapproves of commercial syndicates playing its games, it would not bring charges against Jackson as he had not been told of any illegalities.

The Sunday Times said Ozl (a operated "by a British businessman and his Indian and New Zealand partners" out of an office in Manila. AFP

PEACEKEEPER IS HOME
Merly Batomalaque weeps on the casket of her late husband, M/Sgt. Antonio M. Batomalaque, which arrived early yesterday at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. Batomalaque, who served with the United Nations peacekeeping force in Haiti, was killed two weeks ago by criminals in that troubled Caribbean country. ROGER MARGALLO

Militants, lawmakers buck new power rates

By Abigail L. Ho

MILITANT groups and legislators are strongly opposed to the recent hike in power rates, saying this was "unjustified."

The militant group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) and nongovernment organization Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) blamed the rate hike on the "onerous" contracts entered into by the National Power Corp. with independent power producers.

FDC vice president Wilson Fortaleza said these contracts were the root of the state power firm's financial problems.

"The power rate increase included payments for onerous IPP contracts. Even those ineligible contracts, those not approved by the ERC (Energy Regulatory Commission) on or before Dec. 31, 2001, were also included in the rate base of Napocor," he said.

Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr. said allowing Napocor to raise its rates only showed that the ERC tolerated these "onerous" contracts which would likely lead to even higher rates in the future.

Reyes said the implementation of a 10-percent value-added tax (VAT) on power would result in even more rate hikes.

He estimated that the VAT would jack up power rates by as much as P100 a month, based on a 200-kWh-a-month consumption.

Fortaleza urged the government to instead cancel these "onerous" contracts if it wanted to plug Napocor's money drain.

"Unless the government cancels these contracts, the people will suffer Napocor's continuing rates increases," he said.

Lanao del Norte Rep. Alipio Cirilo Badelles, chair of the House committee on energy, said he would seek a probe into the higher power rates.

In particular, Badelles is questioning the approved rate adjustments for Mindanao which he said were unjustified because of the island's high dependence on hydroelectric power for its electricity needs.

"Unlike the other island grids wherein the supply is generated by imported fuel like coal and bunker, in Mindanao, since it is 60 percent (dependent on) hydro, there should be less upward adjustments on fuel and power purchased from (independent power producers)," he said in a statement.

On Friday, the ERC granted Napocor a rate increase of 5.56 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) on top of the provisional increase of 98 centavos per kWh given in September last year.

ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said the approved rate hike levels were all "justified" and had more than enough basis.

Albano challenged solons to scrutinize all the documents that the ERC used as bases for the approval of the Napocor rate adjustment.

GMA urged to pick ARMM bet quickly

TO AVOID infighting among the administration's allies, a lawmaker from Mindanao yesterday asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to promptly pick her candidates for the Aug. 8 elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

House Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Gerry Salapuddin said the President should announce the administration candidates for governor and vice governor following the Commission on Elections' resolution setting for April 22-30 the period for the filing of certificates of candidacy.

"In view of (this), there is now an urgency that the President and the Lakas party must announce sooner than later the anointed candidates for ARMM governor and vice governor," Salapuddin said.

Aside from the top two posts, the Muslim region will also be replacing the 24 members of the Regional Legislative Assembly.

Salapuddin made the call after the Malacañang search committee endorsed a Maguindanaon, Shariff Aguak Mayor Zaldy Ampatuan, as the administration candidate.

But Teresita Deles, the President's peace adviser and the committee chair, said the last word would still have to come from Ms Arroyo, although there was an unwritten rule among administration party members that the ARMM governorship would be rotated among the leaders of its major tribal groups.

Besides Ampatuan, the search committee also listed as possible candidates Dimas Pundato of the Moro National Liberation Front reformist group, MNLF chair Hatimil Hassan, ARMM Assemblyman Esmael Abubakar of Tawi-Tawi, former ARMM Vice Gov. Mahid Mutilan, ARMM Social Welfare Secretary Bainon Karon, MNLF official Alvares Isnaji and businessman Ibrahim Paglas.

Salapuddin, who was on the list, reminded Malacañang the choice of the administration candidates should be based on the standard criteria and qualities prescribed by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). *Michael Lim Ubac*

Assault on activists alarms CHR

Front page A1

Malolos town (Bulacan) and the pressure group Bilanggo Kaisa (Solidarity of Filipinos for Human Rights) in the Philippines (KSP), or human rights advocates, according to the human rights group Karapatan.

Those groups were among those tagged by the military as "already infiltrated" or "targets for infiltration" by the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed group, the New People's Army (NPA), in a counter-revolutionary strategy instead "Knowing the Enemy."

Included on Kasapatan's list of "political assassinations" were the deaths of Rodolfo Clacio, a common rights lawyer in Eastern Samar, and of William Tadeo, an Igdapuyan priest sympathetic to the cause of striking farmers and evictees in Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac.

"[Attorney Dacio] was a human rights lawyer of the UMDC," Ka Ka Ka Ka said. "[Father] Tadeo, the priest Santo Mesa, the list continuing on case," Calandra said.

Karapatan's records show that an activist was killed in January every night in Philippines some in March and two in April. (See list on this page.) The assassinations happened in Baguio City, Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Kalinga, Quezon, Camarines Norte, Cebu, Leyte and Samar.

During the period, 13 other civilians, who were suspected of being members of the NPA, or of the Moro National Liberation Front, were killed in military operations, said Karapatan secretary general Marie Marc-En Gacutan.

Among those were four members of the Sadiosa family, who were killed in Mandaluyong, Metro, on Feb. 1.

Unprecedented

Because the assassinations are committed against militants and human rights groups with "unprecedented" frequency, Karapatan suspects that the attacks are part of a plan to check the influence of left-leaning organizations.

"We believe these are not isolated incidents. We see a pattern. There are systematic killings, probably part of a government policy [against militants]," Encarnacion said.

She said Karapatan considered the killings part of "an undeclared martial rule."

The human rights group was not alone in its indictment.

Missing

The group Hustisya noted that 511 cases of abductions and disappearances of Bayan-Muna and 19 from its affiliated party-list group Anakpawis had been killed since 2001. In total 18 people had been abducted and were still missing.

"The death toll is also mounting as other progressive party-list groups, as well as militant people's and human rights organizations. Just as disturbing is the number of other civilians, many in remote areas, who are under suspicion of having killed links," Hustisya said in a statement against the killings of activists.

It said the victims came from the 5th Division Top Intelligence (Office of Regional Security) secretary general Nonoy Sanchez, a radio broadcaster, and Anakpawis and KMP leader Ben Concepcion.

Silence

"Does government silence and inaction indicate that it officially sanctions the operations?" Hustisya said.

Sanchez was killed on March 9 and Concepcion on March 17. Bayan was killed on March 14.

"While the ink on our [arrest] warrant to report on one case has yet to dry, another killing happens," Bautista said.

Although a CHR official says a pattern, he doesn't say who the military is behind the killings.

"I can say that it is systematic, but I can't say it's done by soldiers," Gutierrez said.

Finger-pointing

He observed that the military and military groups tended to exchange accusations whenever an arrest was killed.

"Bayan, Bayan, Karapatan and their allies would say that the soldiers are behind it," Calandra said.

"But the soldiers we interviewed say that the New People's Army is the one [responsible, Sen.]. They say the [leftist] group was done killing each other," the CHR commissioner said, referring to the alleged practice of leftist groups of killing some of their own so that the militant will be portrayed as victims.

Government policy?

Encarnacion said short of going after leaders and members of groups critical of the administration was not a government policy. President Macapagal-Arroyo should at least issue a statement saying so.

"We're not to blame anything on

Even her. [The late dictator Ferdinand] Marcos was much better, at least, he didn't have provocateurs and salvadors that he was a dictator. [He forced us pretending that she a practicing to a democracy," Enriquez said.

The alleged assassination of activists happened in the same period that journalists were killed in the provinces, prompting the President to condemn the attacks on media persons and to create a task force to solve their murders.

"When journalists were being killed, she immediately came out with a statement. President Macapagal-Arroyo has yet to issue a statement on the deaths of activists," Enriquez said.

She wondered why the troops had not condemned the killings of militant leaders and human rights workers. "Is it because the casualties from her enemies?" she said.

On April 17, Bayan and other militant groups staged a rally in Manila to protest the killings. Police dispersed the demonstrators and some of them, including a priest, were hit with truncheons. (To be continued in succeeding.)

Corrections

THE PAGE 1 banner story "ID tie linked to 'parking'" yesterday misdated the venue of the award rites for the Kwentong Bayan Latino as Antonio's basement. The rites were held at the San Carlos Borromeo Complex in Guadalupe, Makati City, not San Carlos City in Pangasinan.

THE PAGE A9 gossip column item "Who Ate His Pie" by Kitty Ko is PAST as selected Bayanihan Residence homeless said not POM as stated in the Lifestyle section of Friday, April 22.

The Daily Gospel

Monday, April 25, 2005
Mark the Evangelist

1st Reading: 1 Pt 5:5-14
Gospel: Mark 16:15-20

Jesus told his disciples, "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, the one who refuses to believe will be condemned. Signs like these will accompany those who have believed: in my Name they will cast out demons and speak new languages; they will pick up serpents and, if they drink anything deadly, it will not harm them. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will be healed."

So then, after speaking to them, the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven and took his place at the right hand of God. The Eleven went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs which accompanied them.

Commentary:

Today is the feast of Mark, the writer of the Gospel, the writer of the first gospel. Mark shaped the command of Jesus after the resurrection to "go out into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation." Mark wrote words, and translated the Paul and Barnabas' commission into two calling people to overcome and temptations, believing that all are consumed with them in Word, in Bread, in community and in the words that was given to him to share in with them. He, like Mark, are called to share in Jesus' suffering and to bring his gospel and it with the Spirit of God who strengthened and confirmed and established Mark. And we have been given the same command and same Spirit. We who share in the truth and heart of the gospel are confident in Good News in our age, in our time, in obedience. Peace to us all—the Jesus that Mark so valued accepts what in the world.

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List of activist killings

Name	Age	Position	When	Where
1. Pablito Ignacio	44	Member, Bayan Muna-Bataan	Jan. 17, 2005	San Ildefonso-Bulacan
2. Noel Sacdo	40	Member, ARMC (Alyansang Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon-Pampanga Chapter	Feb. 1, 2005	Guagua, Pampanga
3. Abe Sangil	46	Member, Bataquilan-Pilipinas	Feb. 5, 2005	Nueva Ecija
4. Teresita Alcantar	38	Member, Bayan Muna/Alam Para sa Kei	Feb. 5, 2005	Cuba, Laguna
5. Rodrigo Lacaya	63	Member, ARMC (Alyansang Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon-Pampanga	Feb. 16, 2005	Barangay Lambac, Guagua, Pampanga
6. Christian Amagsay	43	Public Relations Officer, UMWU (Calamba Workers Association Inc. (Chair, member, Anakpawis-Bayan Muna	Feb. 18, 2005	La Paz, Tarlac
7. Rowen Espino	30	Member, ARMC (Alyansang Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon-Pampanga	Feb. 18, 2005	Minalin, Pampanga
8. Rodel Pelejo	28	Local leader, Central Luzon Anti-Landgrabbing Association (CLAA)	Feb. 20, 2005	Kalinga, Bontoc
9. Jose Abraham	28	Local leader, Central Luzon Anti-Landgrabbing Association (CLAA)	Feb. 20, 2005	Kalinga, Bontoc
10. Abdicalin "Abal" Lucman	45	Councilor, Cotta City; Member, Bayan Muna, Executive-Legislative Lupong Pangmasa in consultation and defense of Maranao-Lumad-Moroland	March 3, 2005	Barangay Poblacion, Cotta City
11. Romeo "Romy" Capulong	59	Regional coordinator, Bayan Muna (Bicol); secretary general, Bayan Bicol	March 8, 2005	Naga City
12. Evangelista Bang		Human rights volunteer, Alliance Magbubukid ng Pilipinas-Tamaraw Bang	March 10, 2005	Barangay Malinaopao, Bansal, Lake Caramoran, Norte
13. Jose Cambia		Anakpawis member	March 12, 2005	Barangay Poblacion, Oriental, Zamboanga
14. Fr. William Tadeo	51	Parish priest and head of the human rights desk of Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) Diocese of Tarlac; Member, Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR)	March 12, 2005	La Paz, Tarlac
15. Atty. Felonito Cacuit	51	Regional coordinator, Bayan Muna-Eastern Visayas; human rights lawyer and author-member, Integrated Bar of the Philippines-Leyte chapter	March 19, 2005	Tacloban City
16. Jose L. Reyes	55	Member, Anakpawis-Caraballo Bicol	March 19, 2005	Pampanga, Caraballo Bicol
17. Benny Flores		Member, Anakpawis	March 30, 2005	Land Transportation Office, Mandaluyong City, Cebu
18. Victor "Ka Bel" Concepcion		Secretary general, IALC (Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon-Pampanga coordinator, Anakpawis-chapter of Bataan, Pampanga	March 17, 2005	Bataan, Pampanga
19. Hermilo Aguinaldo		Organizer, Negros Federation of Sugar Workers	April 10, 2005	
20. Alfredo Davis	39	Bayan Muna, municipal coordinator	April 12, 2005	Mahaplag, Leyte

SOURCE: KARAPATAN

Officer touted as next PNP chief gets his 3rd star

THE "CHIEF in waiting" just got his third star.

Director Calderon, described by Philippine National Police Director General Edgar Lumibao as the "chief PNP in waiting," was promoted to Deputy Director General on April 22, it was announced.

"Of course, I'm very happy," Calderon said on the phone. "But an added star is an added responsibility, and it's a huge responsibility."

A member of Philippine Military Academy Class '73, Calderon is currently chief of the PNP Directorial Staff. His office sources it that the PNP Transformation Plan, an ambitious six-year program that aims to create a more credible and professional police force, is effectively implemented. He holds the same post. Gen. Lumibao held before he became PNP chief.

Not a surprise

Calderon's promotion did not really come as a surprise. His current post calls for an officer with the rank of deputy director general. It was simply a matter of time before he would be promoted.

Calderon is related to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Police Director Leon Mangasing (ret.), Calderon's former boss at the PNP Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management, described him as a "well-mannered officer, soft-spoken and very professional."

When Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco retires in May this year, Calderon is expected to head either the office of Deputy Chief for Administration or Deputy Chief for Operations.

Younger days

Before he was appointed chief of the Directorial Staff, Calderon served as director of PNP Region IV. Calderon spent most of his younger days in the field, fighting insurgents and criminals in Cebu.

He will retire on Oct. 1, 2007, the day he turns 56. — Leila A. del Puerto

RP REITERATES PLEA

'Help us bar Pinoys from Iraq'

By Nikko Dizon

THE DEPARTMENT of Foreign Affairs is not to intervene in the countries that send workers to the Philippine government's ban on the deployment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to the war-torn nation, a ranking DFA official has said.

"We are looking at all possible means to strengthen the ban. We will reiterate our position to the neighboring countries of Iraq," said Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Jose Brillantes in an interview Friday.

Last week, the Philippines ceded from the name of the commander-in-chief Abu Sayyaf leader Khadafy Janjalani, and the attack by armed insurgents on Filipino workers in Baghdad.

In the latest incident, Francisco Lee and Marylyn Fernandez sustained gunshot wounds while their companions, Imelda Tolibao, Cesaltro Mejia and Jasmine Baldoz were without but badly shaken.

The five OFWs were attacked on April 18 while on their way to the Baghdad International Airport where they were to take a plane home to the Philippines.

Torres was shot and killed by suspected insurgents on April 17 when he stopped out of the US-controlled Camp Victory to buy a ring tone for his cellular phone, the DFA said.

After Torres' death, US military officials informed the Philippine Embassy that Salazar had been killed in an apparent accident while driving a US military vehicle on April 16.

Brillantes said the DFA would continue to affix "Not Valid for Entry to Iraq" stamps on the passports of OFWs.

Home for OFWs opens

By Leila B. Salaverria

OVERSEAS Filipino workers who need to be in Manila but have no place to stay can take heart.

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa) has opened the doors to a hallway home built specially for them.

The hallway home, which can accommodate 40 people, is located on the second floor of the Owwa office on Mt. Harrison Street in Pasay City.

Owwa Administrator Marianito Roque said the home offers all of its services—including room, meals, personal hygiene kits, medical services and food transport—for free.

"We would like (the OFWs) to feel Owwa's warmth as well as its genuine concern for their welfare," Roque said in a statement.

OFWs who have no place to stay in Metro Manila say usually those from the provinces who are putting their employment papers in order.

The first days have to pay for their job applications are usually high enough that they have nothing left for food and board, especially if they have no relatives in Metro Manila.

OFWs from Luzon will be allowed to stay at the hallway home for three days, while those from the Visayas and Mindanao will be allowed to stay for a week.

House parents are on duty at the hallway home 24 hours a day to supervise activities at the center and to facilitate the dispensing of services. Services available are orientation facilities like table games and a television set.

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DepEd looking to hire 10,000 teachers who know English

By Alcuin Papa

THE DEPARTMENT of Education announced it would intensify the hiring of teachers but would rigidly screen the applicants after finding that many current teachers had flunked an English proficiency test.

DepEd Secretary Florencio "Butch" Abad said that beginning with school year 2005-06, all teacher applicants for the elementary and secondary levels would be required to pass an English proficiency exam before they would be considered for employment.

Abad said the plan was adopted after DepEd officials discovered that most public school teachers failed the English proficiency test recently administered to them.

Earlier, the DepEd announced it would recruit 10,000 new teachers to ease the worsening teacher shortage that has recently contributed to the low quality of education.

Hearing the deterioration of English teaching in the elementary and secondary levels, Abad said the department has had to make adjustments in the hiring of teachers.

"We crafted the new hiring policy to make sure we get good quality teachers and not just those allowed to teach after passing the licensure examination," Abad said.

At a recent press briefing, Education Undersecretary Ramon Bacani said the agency has implemented a strict selection process for teachers.

Bacani said that in the past, the school's selection committee decided on the hiring of teachers. But after DepEd officials saw the poor performance of the teachers, the department decided on the new guidelines in the selection process, which is now handled by division offices.

Review of jailed youths' cases ordered

WITH many minors still languishing in jail, the Department of Justice has ordered a review of the cases of juvenile offenders all over the country.

In a memorandum, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez has directed city, provincial and regional prosecutors and district attorneys to gather information of juvenile offenders detained in their respective areas.

Specifically, he said, the prosecutors should "know the names and status of their cases and the length of their detention."

Gonzalez noted that "minors, as young as 13 years old, have been detained for years, some of whom are facing minor offenses such as theft of fish worth P200 but are reportedly required to post P6,000 bail, which is unnecessarily oppressive."

"I need all these data and your recommendations relative to our program creating a more multipartisan juvenile justice system," he said.

In another development, the Supreme Court is looking into the conditions of prisoners.

On April 14, Senior Associate Justice Reynato S. Puno and Associate Adolfo S. Azcuna inspected the conditions at the Quezon City jail and held a dialogue with inmates regarding the judiciary's role in the penal system.

During the visit, the justices launched a program known as the Defender's Notebook and the Simplified Inmates Records System (SIRS).

In a statement, the SC said the Defender's Notebook would be for the use of inmates in organizing and safekeeping important records of their respective cases.

The SIRS, on the other hand, is a software program designed for use by the SIRS' Records Office to help it in the conservation of databases for the individual inmate's concerns.

Such programs are aimed at speeding up the resolution of the inmates' cases for ready reference in court or other fact-finding investigations.

Puno assured the detainees that "justice may be blind but she has excellent, hearing devices." Associate Justice Azcuna

Pope Benedict XVI formally begins Church stewardship

From page A1

The ring is emblazoned with an image of Peter casting his fishing nets and was traditionally used to seal apostolic letters.

The pallium—a narrow shawl of white lamb and sheep's wool embroidered with five silk crosses—symbolizes the Pope's role as a shepherd taking care of his flock. The pallium is pierced by three golden pins to symbolize the nails driven into the cross on which Christ was crucified. The red color of the crosses is for Christ's blood.

Applause

Looking tired and coughing several times, Pope Benedict was interrupted by applause several times during his homily, particularly by when he invoked his predecessor, John Paul II. "Dear sons of this apostolic, weak servant of God that I am, I must assume this enormous task, which truly exceeds all human capacity," he said.

He quoted John Paul in his inaugural homily in 1978, in which the late Pope said: "Be not be afraid!"

In his homily, Benedict made clear he wanted to reach out to other Christians, delivering "special greetings" to them as well as to Jews "to whom we are joined by a great shared spiritual heritage."

"Finally, like a voice goddessing forth, my thoughts go out to all men and women of today, to believers and non-believers alike," he said.

350,000 at ceremony

In one of his first acts, Benedict had invited Rome's chief rabbi to the installation ceremony. The rabbi, Riccardo di Segni, couldn't attend because of the Passover holidays which began Saturday. Benedict's effort to reach out to the Jews was seen as significant because of his own past. He has acknowledged having a member of Hitler Youth as a teenager and was drafted in army at the German army.

The Vatican said 350,000 people were in and around St. Peter's Square and said another 50,000 were watching the Mass on giant television screens set up nearby. That figure was similar to the number of people who turned out for John Paul's April 8 funeral, although a total of three million people had flocked to Rome in the days surrounding his death and the funeral Mass.

Many people in the crowd Sunday toted banners and flags—including from Benedict's native Germany—even as they kept John Paul in the back of their minds.

"We don't know much about him, but he seems good," said Enrico Pesci, an infant from Asti, near the northwestern city of Turin, who drove with his wife and two daughters to Rome for the Mass. "If we can, we'll like a flower of [the work of] John Paul."

Along with an estimated 100,000 pilgrims from Germany, political and ceremonial dignitaries on the list of those attending included German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, Prince Albert II of Monaco and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, the US president's brother and a convert to Roman Catholicism.

Pope Benedict's brother, the Rev. Georg Ratzinger, had a prominent seat on the basilica esplanade.

Queen Sofia of Spain, wearing a white dress and white mantilla, as last seal, mingled with black-clad dignitaries on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica as they awaited for the start of the Mass.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Metropolitan Christodoulos, a top priest for Greece's Orthodox, and a senior representative of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Kirill, were also on the list of those attending.

Few top Islamic leaders were on hand, and the Israeli presence was complicated by the weekend Passover holiday.

Tight security

Italian authorities had tight security in place. Boats patrolled the Tiber River, a no-fly zone was imposed, and 6,000 police were deployed in Rome for most of Sunday. Italian forces had anti-missile systems in place and aeroplanes on patrol alongside State surveillance aircraft. Some 10,000 police were being deployed.

The Ceremony of Procession was scheduled for 30 minutes, including the senior cardinal deacon, Jorge Medina Estevez, the Chilean who proclaimed Pope Benedict's name to the world from the basilica balcony last Tuesday.

After Pope Benedict was presented with the ring and pallium, Medina Estevez said in Latin: "May the spirit of truth, which precedes from the Father, grant abundant inspiration and discernment to your ministry as confirm brothers in the unity of faith."

There 11 people—symbolizing Christ's 12 disciples—lined up and pledged obedience to Benedict, kneeling before him and kissing his golden ring. Pope Benedict greeted each one, chatting with each for a few seconds.

The Mass brought Pope Benedict back to the steps of St. Peter's Basilica, where he gave a moving funeral homily for his late Pope. But men have helped convince fellow cardinals to choose Joseph Ratzinger as the new pontiff last Tuesday.

In 1978, John Paul walked to the crowds after his installation. But security worries—and memories of the 1981 assassination attempt against the late Pontiff—have placed Mobile on papal movements. Still, the white open-topped vehicle Pope Benedict rode in was similar to the one which carried John Paul around the Vatican, without bulletproof glass windscreen protection.

Installation has official installation, Pope Benedict was framing a papacy meant to dispel his ecclesiastical image as the dour guardian of Roman Catholic doctrine, a post he held for 24 years under John Paul.

He has promised to seek greater dialogue with all Christians and open "sincere dialogue" with other faiths. Already, those pledges and his relaxed manner have softened the rigid reputation. ■

POPE Benedict XVI waves to the crowd as he rides on the popemobile through St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, following his installation Mass. —AP

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The WORLD

Ellen Lawrence B. Gozzo

(SPANISH) Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (left) and Chinese President Hu Jintao before the start of their meeting in Jakarta April 22. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

China, Japan mend fences

JAKARTA/TOKYO—The leaders of China and Japan pulled relations between the Asian giants back from the brink at a weekend meeting, but analysts said bitter memories of Japan's wartime history and rivalry for influence will keep ties fragile.

Chinese President Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi appear to have papered over their countries' worst row in three decades during talks in Jakarta on Saturday, a day after Koizumi made an unusually public apology for Japan's past atrocities in Asia.

"The leaders' summit went well, in that they were able to build it. They avoided the worst-case scenario," said Ryoshi Takai, a professor at Hokkaido University in northern Japan.

"But China is saying harsh words with action and that means the diplomacy will again return to the hardest area.

In what Prime Minister Koizumi described above that is the key," he said, referring to the controversial war cemetery visits to Tokyo.

Japan's Asahi Shimbun newspaper in an editorial added: "What seems to have happened is that a hand-aid was applied to the wound to stop the bleeding. But the injury itself has not been remedied at all. The risk is very high that the wound will worsen and that it will open up again at some point."

Opening their one-hour meeting, held at the end of a gathering of Asian and African leaders in Jakarta, Hu told Koizumi that renewed expressed for Japan's wartime past should be translated into action. The Chinese leader said Japan should "never do anything again that would hurt the feelings of the Chinese people."

He also urged Japan not to support formal independence for self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing has claimed as its own since their split at the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949.

Koizumi said both hands to shake the hand of a stiff and expressionless Hu and told a news conference later that he and Hu agreed to make efforts to develop the bilateral friendship instead of aggravating antagonistic feelings.

Koizumi did not say if he would stop visiting the shrine which has been the source of much of the friction.

"The differences in their standpoints are still quite large," said Zhu Feng, director of the International Security Program at Peking University. "China still wants Japan to take concrete actions, for example to stop the visits to the shrine."

Relations with Chinachilled markedly after Koizumi took office in 2001 and began annual visits to the shrine. He has not visited this year. Reuters

Stoned to death for adultery

MAZAR-E-SHARIF, Afghanistan—An Afghan woman has been stoned to death for adultery, police said on Sunday, the first such incident in Afghanistan since the Taliban's ouster from power.

Amina, a 29-year-old married woman, was publicly stoned to death on the basis of a district court's decision on Thursday in Sayghan district in the area of Dawlatabad, the provincial capital of Sholakhaan, they said.

"She has been stoned to death," provincial police chief, Gen. Shah Jahan Noorzai, confirmed to Reuters, adding a man had been cited in the area to witness the incident further.

Adultery is forbidden in the Muslim country and under Islamic sharia law the penalty can range from flogging to stoning to death.

Several women and men were given such punishments in Sholakhaan, a remote northeastern province, during the government of the Mujahideen (holy warriors) in the 1990s.

The practice became common during the rule of hardline Taliban, who controlled most of Afghanistan till late 2001 when they were ousted from power by US-led forces. Reuters

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SPORTS

PC BUYER'S GUIDE

WHAT'S INSIDE

RP Pool A cagers rip Iran

By Jure Navarro

KANGEI against a one-dimensional team, the versatile San Mig Cafe-Philippine team a whipped the Iranian national squad, 79-60, late night in the FIBA 3X3 Invitational Challenge at the Aranaeta Coliseum.

After Aydin Kilit opened the game with a three-pointer, the Nationals took over, drilling in triples, pulling down huge rebounds and running the floor like a well-oiled machine.

And it was only the first time the members of the national pool got together.

"We hardly had complete attendance in practice but except for the newcomers, the team got along pretty well," said national head coach Chot Reyes.

"But the most important thing for me was the effort of the players. We have a group of guys who are talented but we also have guys who did the dirty work," added Reyes.

Tilt-minute Andy Williams, a 6-foot-5 Detroit-born sharpshooter, was all beside in defense while sharing a piece of his arsenal as a team formed only three months ago.

Williams paced the Nationals with 13 points and nine rebounds, including a pair of triples that helped the RP squad build a 46-24 halftime incline around quarter.

"I'm always known to be the shooter of Williams. He's an inner-game player but one thing I like about him is his ability to come off the bench and energize the whole team," said Reyes.

Danny Seigle chipped in 12 points while Yancy De Ocampo and Cyrenzie Formentera added 11 points each for the squad that played as San Mig Cafe-RP Team A.

The San Mig Cafe-RP Team B featuring Eric Menk, Mark Cagulangan and Jimmy Alapag as Ranidel the starters today.

Meanwhile, Reyes said he would rather have the RP team see action in the Stankovic Cup than the Asaya Cup slated in Fujoi at the end of July.

"But joining that tournament is strictly by invitation only and unfortunately this year, we're not among the teams to which were invited," said Reyes.

Qatar trounced China for the title during the inaugural season of the Stankovic Cup last year.

The scores:

SAN MIG CAFE-RP 79—Williams 13, Seigle 12, de Ocampo 11, Formentera 11, Tibayan 8, Salvo 7, Raymundo 6, Perez 4, Corpuz 3, Arboleda 2.

IRAN 60—Kilit 18, Adel 12, Sabzikar 12, Dezfuli 8, Hosseini 8, Gholamreza 2, Ramezi 2, Rostami 2, Mohajeri.

Quarterscores: 20-11, 31-24, 60-46, 79-60.

Guard Baguion Montaña's Mr. Clutch

By Jasmine W. Paya

OVERSHADOWED by Shaniala teammates Alex Compton and Jun Dan Salvador, just-sized Perales Baguion recently grew by leaps and in the PBL Unity Cup.

But when the 5-foot-7 playmaker boasted two games-winning baskets in a row, everyone remembered how good he is.

"Pwedan kasama siken. I need him," said coach Robert Bunt of Baguion, who was named to the league's Player of the Week. "He's an import player. He knows when to do especially during crucial times."

Last Tuesday, Baguion hosted a dramatic winning jumper with only a second remaining. Tied at 86-86, he received a midcourt pass from Compton and raced down court to hit the game-clinching basket for an 88-86 overtime triumph against Pedestal Pistol.

Four days later, the shortest player in the league again showed resolved at crunch time. With the game knotted at 72-72, Baguion drove through traffic for the game-winning layup and 74-72 seconds left, lifting the Jewels past Tecora Otis-Lorenzo, 74-72.

With Baguion's heroics, the PBL Open champions remain as the only undefeated team in five games.

"He's a wonder guy," said Ginoo of the former National University standout.

"He hadn't see rest in the last two games. He's so tense and he can deliver when the going gets tough."

But Noon stressed that Baguion knows his duties in the team. With the Jewels' assistant offensive weapons, Baguion, in fact, welcomes his point guard role.

"He's not really an offensive player but he looks to help to a big [home] extent," said Noon.

"He knows how to call the shots inside the court. He can easily relay my instructions. He's my extension on the court."

Magnaye, Legaspi lead way to semis

PETER Magnaye and Bianca Legaspi continued to dominate the NYC Badminton Open Junior Championships, trouncing opponents four in straight sets in advance to the semifinal round of their respective divisions in the 14-under division at SM Manila over the weekend.

Magnaye, the defending champion, held off Ad Petra of Bulacan, 15-8, 15-9, to assure a return duel with JP Bolisay of Batangas, who downed Dalmacio Rodeo Rivera, 15-3, 15-8.

The other semis match in the boys side pits Randolph Bolaños against Joel Vivas.

Bolaños struggled past Vanness Jones-new article Vivas rallied from a first set loss for a 15-7, 15-7, 15-4 victory.

Legaspi, on the other hand, primed up for her fourth-straight match with Bobby Castillo by thumping Jonalene Quemuyana, 11-1, 11-4, to lead the semifinalists in the girls' side of the event sponsored by NC and AM Supermarkets.

Castillo was equally impressive as her 11-7, 11-2 demolition of Kiara Castelo, while Abigael Garcia and Sunita Belen took the two-other semis berths by beating their respective rivals Mia Pamintuan, 11-2, 11-9, and Pia Balane, 11-8, 11-0.

Legaspi and Garcia teamed up for Kimberly Ann Cruz and Jasmee Calandes, 15-6, 15-8, to barge into the semis of the girls' doubles of the tournament hosted by Gozon, Abadia, Kenny Rogers, Epson, Hunter Life, Chris Sports, Lasingerie, Power's made, Crystal Water, The STAR, Pinoytechnique.com, shoot and be set, the official outfitter of the tournament.

They will face the Villarin sibling—Ms. Janet and Ms. Perla—who overcame stubborn win over the pair of Camille Sing and Kristine Corsiano, while Castillo and partner Maria Espino pulled off a 15-8, 15-8 nod over Cairon Ortiz-no and Kiana Castelo to set up a semis clash with Ms. Lourdes Lacpao and Kristianne Theodora, who beat Alexandra Villarin and Pia Ordoñez, 15-2, 15-9.

LADIES FED LEAGUE

Sta. Elena, Tagaytay forge duel

STA. ELENA and Tagaytay Highlands forged a showdown for the inaugural Ladies Federation League championship after beating their semifinal opponents in contrasting styles over the weekend.

Other Stones and Angie Co came to the rescue for the Elena, ditching the dominant game by winning their aggregate duel with the Manila Southwoods duo of Claire Ong and Marissa Sison, who succumbed after going 4-down with four holes left.

The Bad Lemur was 1-2-in-a-record and Sta. Elena, ably captained by Gina Slaney, needed just a dozen in their team match with the No. 3 ranked Southwoods after opening a 3-0 runway an hours two days earlier.

Southwoods went down fighting, with Connie Campos-Cynthia Howard taking the afternoon three point and Claudine Cruz-Florence Ortiz-no winning the high low duel.

Tagaytay Highlands, which had a 3-0 lead going in to home game against top seed Orchard, gave the resolute half-point to its returning captain Emely Pecson thereafter the quietest possible way.

Jocelyn Tayengco and Veronica Velasco got the job done early as they throttled off Agnes Gomez and Jo-anne Kerr in the afternoon three on the 12th hole.

The ensuing game-pitting Lizzie de Villa-Asuncion Vergara versus Jessica-rule Rhiza Fontanilla in high low and Mailene Phoebe Princess Bangloy against Misty Agustin-Maddie Cifrano were washed with the final outcome already settled.

The title match is set April 18-19 with Sta. Elena opting to host the first day.

It will be an interesting duel pitting a veteran-laced lineup of Stallions against an unpredictable Tagaytay side-anchored by two-par golfers, sisters Debbie and Lynn Lacanilao.

The league organized by the Federation of Golf Clubs Philippines, Inc. is sponsored by Prudential Bank, Junior Achievers Century Land, Inc., Citibank NA and Schwing Pitagel-Coppercom.

LA TENORIO of Harbour Centre drives against Arwyn Lazaro of Magnolia in their PBL game won by the Portmasters Saturday

Ladies provide sidelight to TM billiards tilt

TONY Ann Nobleza hopes to sparkle before her home crowd today as Team Cavite hosts Manila in the TM 9-Ball Champions League At the SM Supermall in Bacoor-Imus.

But Nobleza expects no sugar-coating from another lady cue artist, Suby Jimenez, who is named as one of the top players in this event organized by Bandarilyan Interprises Inc. and hosted by Tanah Molido, Binondoanin and Alaska.

Monica led the Manila squad of Ali Atienza in a 5-1 victory over Pangasinan at the just-packed SM Supermall activity area in Batangas City last Monday.

But anticipated showdown with Nobleza, who shone for Team Cavite of Gov. Ayong Maliksi in a 6-2 victory over the Pasig squad of Rep. Dodot Jaworski, is expected to highlight the IBC 13 schemer of the TM 9-Ball Ang Bagong Simul program that promises at 8 p.m. on April 28.

The television program, which airs every Monday from 9:30-10:30 p.m., will also feature a trick shot and instructional segment.

The Touch Mobile event is a double-elimination tourney only nine players are allowed to break. Matches start at 1 p.m.

Batangas, a 5-1 winner over Makati on the first day, takes on Pasig this time, while Batangas and Makati square off in a battle of opening-day losers.

Organizers Sammy Ramos and Touch Mobile brand manager Herman Almeda will also be on the lookout for players who value team play, sportsmanship and excellent work ethic for the TM (Team Master) Ed award, a side event of the TM 9-Ball Champions League.

Shirley Lazaro of Batangas City leads all Tess Masters with 25 points, a point ahead of closest pursuer Jamiel Mason of Team Cavite. Allan Solleza of Team Batangas is currently third with 22 points.

ANTHONY Arevalo and dad Abagail rev up another trip to San Diego

Arevalos chasing World Jungolf berths again

NINE-year-old Jade Chest age are accompanied with gumshoes and fashion dolls every summer, Anthony and Abegail Arevalo are turning in time in the between-and-strong ranges preparing for the Junior World golf championships.

Making up early and dressing practically the entire day to bring balls and getting instructions from their dad, Anthony and Abegail are slowly reducing the hints of their efforts after placing prominently in the first half of the qualifying series in San Diego.

"They want another shot, because they came so close last week," said father Tony. "The good thing about these kids is that I never had to deter them in practice [sic]."

"They know what they want and going to practice is already in their system," added Tony. "I didn't have to push them."

The 9-year-old Anthony is campaigning in Class E, contested by players 9 years old and under, while Abegail is in Class C the division for players 11 and younger.

Abegail leads an upsetting score in the first half today while Anthony trails 68. Anthony by 12 shots in second place, shadowed Mippy Yee.

Abegail takes a nine-stroke lead over Noelle Dizon in the fourth round today.

New picture: Tragic Pacquiao emerging

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

PE WILL never lose the terrific picture of Manny Pacquiao, his face a mask of blood and pain, slugging it out half-blind in the 12th and final round against Erik Morales.

This is the photo we will be cheering kids of future generations when they ask what type of a hero is Pacquiao made.

Pacquiao was a real warrior.

He may not be as skillful, not as fiery as Flash Elorde.

But those in comparison terms could always point to his big fighting heart when they try to line up Pacquiao with Elorde in the unofficial race for all-time greatness.

***

Elorde, a former bootblack, reigned as world 130-lb. champion for seven and a half years.

Pacquiao has had brief stints as world flyweight king and world junior featherweight champ.

He was often eyed compared to other legionnaires as far as the sweet science of boxing was concerned.

But taking on a killer left punch and a relentless offensive, he lifted Filipino pride to a record high when he spun and snapped Mexican legend Marco Antonio Barrera in the 11th round in Texas in 2003.

Pacquiao next stirred a close shot at invincible tabby when he lost to Morales in their classic encounter in Las Vegas last March.

***

For the record, Pacquiao pegged the favorite, was clearly outboxed by the more skillful Mexican, who came in at his best against the Filipino mauler.

To this day, it could not be soundly established how Morales, who had never been stopped in 49 fights, having lost only two bouts by close decision, was hardly given a chance against Pacquiao in their showdown at Las Vegas.

If it's any consolation, it could be said that Pacquiao, despite losing nearly six points, was never outfought.

In fact, there continued to be a chance for a relentless Pacquiao rewards, although the Mexican ring great had said he planned to move up in weight.

***

Looking back, there are experts who note any Pacquiao could've left inside of his prime and ability on the training grim.

It's their own way of ensuring Pacquiao had ultimately overcompared. ("Mukumuar sa gym ang gating.")

Pacquiao himself had admitted he had lacked the necessary skills and movements, mainly for the last few years.

It's a fight of honesty the requirement for victory was for Pacquiao to outpace himself, be pressed predictable, hesitative and often hollow.

He also had to do a lot of talking in the pre-fight, terrible Morales who stayed focused, impervious mostly quiet in his outings up the Mexican mountains.

***

All told, other than skills and preparation, the showdown against like-pure sets also decided (anchwise) with deeper character.

Here burns a savvy post-fight scenario for Pacquiao, who had left the ring against Marquez with his head held high.

A tough, gutsful loser of Pacquiao has moved to emerge following the post-fight skirmishes he has had to wage against those managing his finances.

It's become clear that he's being subpoenaed to bigger events.

Pacquiao continued to amass he had been cheated of deserved earnings.

***

Meanwhile, the sexy people who had characterized Pacquiao to appreciable were also redistributing him to audience beyond the ring.

What Pacquiao's business manager, Rod Nazareno, had made public, it is bid to protect his turf and honor, was both alarming and lamentable.

Atty. Nazareno: "Pumasok sa personal nami. Pero pinatong pa rin sa akin. Hanggang sabi ko, dasal lang. ... Sinasaid din yata. *But after a few weeks, eyes na ang may sabing.*"

Pacquiao, for his part, has reportedly set aside a hefty sum for the services of a famous American lawyer to pursue his case against Mikael Mahonemani Ala Eala.

A long, devastating fight is predicted for Pacquiao outside the looming ring.

We will never lose the great picture of a bloodied but doubtly determined Manny Pacquiao in that showdown against Erik Morales.

That there's also this new, tragic phase of him emerging. It's both ugly and shameful.

2 car bomb attacks kill 6 Iraqis

TIKRIT, Iraq — Two suicide bombers detonated powerful car bombs outside an Iraqi police academy Sunday, a day after US President George Bush announced that local security forces were not ready to leave Iraq.

At least six people, including four policemen, were killed and 26 others injured in the attack in Tikrit, ousted Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's hometown some 130 km north of Baghdad.

The coordinated bombings took place within 20 minutes of each other outside administration buildings housing a police academy and security forces' offices, the latest in a spate of attacks targeting security forces in Iraq.

The local governor imposed a curfew on the town and closed off access.

The first bomber detonated his charge outside the academy at 8:30 a.m. as recruits gathered ahead of a trip to neighboring Jordan for training, police Col. Abdullah Ali told AFP.

A second bomber blew up his car 20 minutes later just a few meters away outside an army office of liaison with US forces, a drama of carnivory and rescuers rushed in to deal with the initial carnage.

In addition to the four killed, police sources included 16 wounded, said Ali.

A security source said the car bombs were packed with at least one ton of explosives.

There has been a sharp upsurge in attacks in recent days, particularly against security forces, after a relative lull that followed the Jan. 30 elections.

But 12 weeks on Iraqi leaders have yet to form a new government, creating a political vacuum that some fear could play into the hands of insurgents.

Both on Saturday had linked what he saw as a new infusion of US dollars to form a viable Iraqi security force, stressing that for the first time since the US-led invasion two years ago, Iraqi troops and police were outnumber US forces.

"Today, more than 100,000 Iraqi security forces have been trained and equipped, and for the first time, the Iraqi army, police and security forces outnumber US forces in Iraq," Bush said in his weekly radio address.

The Pentagon said the number of "trained and equipped" members of Iraqi security forces now exceeded 135,000, while 60 troop strength fell below 140,000 this week following the departure of most reservists.

Forming a viable Iraqi security force capable of defending the country against attacks by insurgents is the central element of a US exit strategy.

US plans call for training and equipping 271,000 members of the Iraqi military and police by the middle of next year.

But the US Government Accountability Office recently said Iraqi security forces remain crippled by poor discipline, questionable loyalties and a rate of absenteeism possibly reaching tens of thousands. It also expressed doubts about the quality of Iraqi recruits.

Iraqi Interior Ministry spokesperson Sabah Kadhi said that as many as 35,000 police who have been trained and put on the police payroll, "cannot working for a variety of reasons." Of the 135,000, about 100,000 are working," Kadhi told AFP, adding that he felt the figure of 135,000 was more accurate than Bush's number.

A senior US defense official acknowledged the capabilities of Iraqi police and other security forces "vary from unit to unit."

But the official noted that between 1,500 and 1,000 soldiers and police were joining up every week and "the trend is clearly positive."

Insurgents on Saturday killed nine Iraqi soldiers in a suicide bombing in Abu Ghraib on the western outskirts of Baghdad, while an Associated Press Television News cameraman was killed while covering a battle in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

"What's amazing to me is that despite all these attacks, we still have no trouble recruiting police men and soldiers to join in the [US-led] security forces," said US Col. Bill Gardner. AFP

CANDLES FOR ILHAN ARMENIANS

Armenians living in Moscow light candles during a memorial commemorating the 90th anniversary of mass killings by Ottoman Turks April 23. Up to 1.5 million Armenians perished in what is called killings. It was 1915 to 1917 as the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor of modern Turkey, was falling apart.

Ousted Ecuador leader gets asylum in Brazil

QUITO — A diplomatic standoff over ex-Ecuadorean leader Lucio Gutierrez inched closer to resolution early Sunday, following word from Brazil the ousted president will be flown out of the country later in the day.

"If everything goes according to plan, former President Gutierrez will arrive in Brazil tomorrow," a Foreign Ministry official told AFP in Brasilia late Saturday. "Brazil is taking all necessary measures to make it possible."

A Brazilian Air Force plane was expected to take off in the early afternoon from Porto Velho and head for the Ecuadoran capital to pick up the former president, who has been granted asylum in Brazil following his ouster last Wednesday amid popular unrest.

Officials said the plane had been granted authorization to land, despite requests by Ecuadorean prosecutors that Gutierrez, who has been holed up at the Brazilian embassy here since his removal, be handed over to new Ecuadoran authorities.

Ecuadorean Interior Minister Mercedes Gandara said safe passage for Gutierrez "cannot be denied," but agreed a arrangements will be kept confidential for security reasons.

Gutierrez, meanwhile, told local television he had been removed from office "unconstitutionally and without political trial, and without having committed any form of duty.

"I am not a thief. I have not stolen. To the contrary I am relieving the debts from the thieves," he said by telephone from the Brazilian ambassador's residence in his first statement since being toppled Wednesday by a vote of Ecuador's Congress.

Gutierrez's vice president, Alfredo Palacio, named president by Congress, was still governing without international recognition. The OAS has vowed to send a mission here as soon as possible to look into Gutierrez's ouster and withhold its recognition for now.

The United States said it was ready to work with new authorities in Ecuador but also declined to explicitly say it recognized the new government. Quito has not said whether any action has been taken against the deposed leader to go into exile in Brazil. AFP

Asia, Africa revisit past to re-energize alliance

BANDUNG, Indonesia – Asian and African leaders Sunday signed a new message of fervor to bond trade and tackle poverty, but warned their attempt to revive a historic bond forged half a century ago would falter without firm action.

Under massive security scores of heads of state gathered in the Indonesian spa city of Bandung for a ceremony to endorse the pact to improve the lives of almost three quarters of the world's people, including many of its poorest.

Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and co-hosts Thabo Mbeki of South Africa were joined by China's Hu Jintao, Junichiro Koizumi of Japan and UN chief Kofi Annan on a symbolic stroll through the sealed-off city center.

The leaders were attempting to recreate a mark in 1955 made by iconic statesmen including China's Zhou Enlai, India's Jawaharlal Nehru and Indonesia's Sukarno as they gloried the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement in Bandung.

But while their modern-day successors hope the new friendship will match the "spirit" of the previous meeting summit's opulent stand in the G8/50s era, analysts say it is unlikely to inspiring new benefits.

At the signing ceremony, Yudhoyono also warned that the alliance of almost 50 countries would falter unless Asian and African nations remained united in their commitment to broad pledges of cooperation and mutual support.

"History will judge us on the basis of what we do to the days, months and years ahead—whether we are true to the Bandung spirit...or are half a decade full-on of political turns."

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the two continents must strive to repeat the original meeting and the Non-Aligned Movement, or NAM, it spawned, describing 1955 as the "high water of mutual respect and idealism."

"Just as the NAM played a central role in the struggle for political emancipation in the past, we need to revitalize this movement to make it a vehicle for rapid social and economic transformation and unleash the potential of our lives."

The leaders have agreed to meet again in South Africa in 2006, hoping to consolidate the words of a two-day summit in Jakarta by making it a regular fixture.

Observers, however, say although well-meaning, the alliance will make no goals.

Amitav Acharya, the deputy director of Singapore's Institute for Strategic Studies, said the 2005 meeting may help formulate ways to enable issues such as $50-$100 that the long-term eradication of poverty would be beyond their grasp.

"The Bandung spirit is something of a myth. Bandung was a very successful meeting, it created the Non-Aligned Movement," he told AFP. "But it was a different time, I'm not sure this will have the same impact, the world has moved on."

Analysts say down-to-earth bite-sizing in a number of ideas and assistance about Asian and African trade was almost purely symbolic, lacking the trade-breaking promise of the original meeting, said Acharya.

"For many of those attending in 1955, this was their first international summit, but that's not the case now. Almost half the original Bandung members were not part of the United Nations, now almost all are." AFP

INDONESIA's regina arrive at the 50th anniversary celebrations of the 1955 Asian-African Conference in the Indonesian town of Bandung in West Java April 24. The event marked the first time the Third World summit in event itself.

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INQUIRER

OPINION

'Jueteng,' again

EDITORIAL

THE POOR you will always have with you, Christ himself told his disciples. Did he foresee, 2,000 years ago, that the biggest Christian nation in Asia would in time formulate a Philippine corollary to his statement? The poor man's game, too, you will always have with you.

Jueteng, the illegal numbers game which caused the downfall of the greatest of all presidential gamblers, is older than the republic. It was already around in Rizal's time, and even then it was already suspected as a benign form of gambling. It was alleged to have been contributed right to Malacañang during Joseph Estrada's presidency, the high point in its history. But according to the police's own estimates, it has only grown bigger since Estrada's ouster.

Today, it is a multibillion-peso, nationwide business. There is always a profit, because the operators pay good money for protection. And because the game is rigged.

Bettors believe that winning numbers are chosen through chance. But draws are predetermined. They provide easy targets for the occasional police raid, and for the risk of bankrupting the capitalists. So today, draws are no longer held. Jueteng "lords" simply choose the "right" combination of numbers, and spread the word via a text message.

In other words, the so-called poor man's game is a vice twice over. It encourages the waste of money, sooner or than not, and it is based on deceit.

But operators know enough to keep several bettors happy, every day. Like other forms of entertainment, jueteng keeps its audience largely by word of mouth.

Many factors explain why the illegal numbers game continues to flourish.

One potent factor is the government's own confusion about gambling's true nature, and its role in society. It allows some forms of gaming, but bans others. Only the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., for instance, has the legal mandate to operate casinos. In the public mind, however, the distinction between legal and illegal is so much quibbling gab.

"We can launch campaigns but people also resist because jueteng is a form of entertainment," says Izabela Gov. Grace Padica, who ran and won last year partly on an anti-jueteng platform. "They say why are the rich allowed to gamble in casinos?"

If the government allows rich people to waste their money in casinos, why should the poor be deprived of the same privileges in jueteng? Crude logic, but in real life there is no moralizing the persuasive power of such an argument.

Another factor is the government's proverbial lack of funds, which allows jueteng operators to integrate the game into the very system that is supposed to stop it. Much of the "integration" takes the shape of giant monthly millions of unaccountable pesos down the line. But operators know enough to fund legitimate and necessary police operations as well.

"The police can't help you because they will tell you 60 to 80 percent of their operation funds come from the mayors," Padica told the barrio. "Where do the mayors get it but from jueteng?"

Only the other week, the country's leading anti-jueteng crusader, Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz, claimed that jueteng had in fact worsened under the Aquino administration, with more and more public officials "willing recipients and grateful beneficiaries of gambling payoffs."

A third factor is the nature of the business, which is not really financial but political. The toll of jueteng lords changes according to who is in power.

According to a ranking police official, this year's "Big 3" collection "slashed something that's precious" only after President Macapagal-Arroyo won last year's presidential election. Their contributions may or may not go all the way to Malacañang, but to succeed in this kind of business you only need to benefit from other people's perceptions.

What can be done then? Bishop of Bayombong Ramon Villena thinks all it would take is for the President to flex her political muscle. Jueteng ceases when the governor orders the provincial [police] director to stop jueteng," Villena said. "Similarly, the entire Philippines will be totally free of jueteng when President Macapagal-Arroyo will be bold enough to categorically say 'No' to jueteng."

That would be a good start. But unfortunately, the problem is much complicated than that. A "No" to jueteng is less categorical when preceded by a "Yes" to casinos and thousands upon thousands of slot machines.

Execs of losing Napocor among highest paid

WHAT can a national identification card do to prevent terrorism? The "harmless" information that will be put there will be provided by the applicant himself. A terrorist will not volunteer information that will betray him. He will create a different identity for him. He can even use several identities. He can even buy fake IDs at Recto.

Terrorists are not born yesterday. And I don't think the government can outdo the information given by them. It will have to take the bonnet's word for it. It will be as useless as the present student-enrollment records already using the holder and his place of residence. In fact, the residence certificate is nothing more but a pinnacle to raise money for local governments' coffers. Will the residence certificate be scrapped then?

Besides, how can a national ID prevent terrorism when, according to Malacañang, it is only for employees of the executive department? It supposedly will not cover employees of the judiciary, Congress, the Office of the Ombudsman, the judiciary and local government units. In other words, employees of the executive department will have dual ID, driver's license, Consular ID, passport, etc., replaced with a new ID while all the rest will continue to use old ones, both their originals? Instead of making manageable business simpler and easier, it will make it more confusing.

The national ID will not be the latest manifestation of the Spanish-era cedula that became finally outmoded and foreign-sounding as Bahaynons to signal the Philippine Revolution. It can provide another one. Except that the rebels cannot now up the phrase ID with their fingers. They will have to use actions.

The Kapapanon hated the cedula because it was to use made to the ladies, a symbol of their servitude to the Spaniards. They had to show it when demanded by the guardias civil.

That is why persons-day Filipinos are still all-hinges to nationalistic holidays, gatherings, or even parades. Only the rebels, and not just anybody to produce his national ID, and if he is in the correct position may be in the cedula or

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

nated to control our country—by Filipinos, who would not show any ID during the Japanese occupation, were arrested as guerrilla suspects.

But the ID is not an end-to-terror one, as Malacañang's defenders. The information they will save will be the same information already found in your cedula IDs. The information will only be put together in one card, they say.

If so, why waste more money to produce another one to replace the others that are serving their purpose satisfactorily? Nobody is complaining, so why change them? The complaint is against being required to get another one—by the spring guys. "It's ain't broke, don't fix."

And why preempt Congress from passing a bill authorizing a national ID system by issuing an executive order? There are already several bills in that effect pending in both houses of Congress. The Supreme Court has already declared as unconstitutional a similar executive order issued by President Fidel Ramos. Why risk being rebuffed again by the Supreme Court? Does President Macapagal-Arroyo already have an assurance from the Supreme Court that it will reverse itself in a new case? After all, it already reversed itself on the EDSA-Shaw boulevard issue. But what will that matter of the national identification rubber stamp? After that, will the people still obey the high court?

Well, EDSA may not exactly have a friend as appointees of President Aquino now constitute six of the present 15 justices. There's a majority vote. Besides, the tribunal already has the last several times in favor GMA—the first vote, when it gave its blessings to her illegal takeover of the presidency from President Estrada.

But whether we can get past the next one that had to jump the gun on Congress: She was going to

Old and new

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

I AGREE the moment when the point of separation, and the replied P11. Also, my hair said, a little embarrassed, even Supt Cruz was not surprised to see young priests. I laughed. The separation hardly mattered. And definitely years in Baja, a pass still has value and puts a long way to keeping both and seniority.

The restaurants are New Dawn, my favorite penny spoons in Baja, and one of the reasons I keep coming back to the land of tax, well, a lesser childhood, if not birth. Years ago, one of us, sometimes used to hang a dress by spreading the rumor that the reason he came in the neighborhood looked famished was that, there had nothing to feed on. The rate had decreased and found there were now one of the restaurants is even popular offerings.

The name was then, here in Manila, Ma Mon Luk's competitors supposed many years ago that the reason we are absorbed around rice in morning rumor, I don't know if the reason that anything to reduce fresh plates' business. I do know that the round that continued to Rush to them afterward was known to say maybe that was the source of that report's incomparable success.

I still go to New Dawn because it is one of the last vestiges of Baja I can cling to. It gives much looks the way it did from way back, a bigger space and a second floor penthousing dinner became over the years. Light streamed plentifully through it in the morning, but it is only the ceiling a reasonably high, an even bond fan is enough to ventilate the place. The building across the street remains in Spanish bonnets, and proudly announces its occupancy as far as 1926. The area screams through along with the morning light.

New Dawn is one of the few things that have survived the onslaught of the fast food culture (contributors to progress can stay truly dining). I am fond just now to find ourselves and neighborhood fixed like Baja-esque, with a gaudy young women and siestas or more scrupled in gift boxes, drenched in coconut milk. The "demolish" is no exaggeration. Two things Bajanos do not say sparingly in their food: one is coconut milk, the other is chili pepper. You still find pinanggat were no-cholesterol diet—their food plates, or specialty restaurants. Friends in Baja can through the treasure still lies in the deepest recesses of the stomach, their tentacles unbroken by huge cauldrons where you see the guy still insisting when the lid is lifted, being lunch down the line. But it nonetheless still in her attendance. For unfathomable reasons, it has three-pointed back in Baja's culinary landscape by the fast-food-type invasion.

I personally am not a sucker for nostalgia and can't stand the very long radio stations or pubs that mechanically inflict oldies music. I do like to hear oldies once now and then, it does bring back a flood of memories, but I do not like to hear it all the time. I do not rush to shows, write bulldog, to that flood. Things do change, are all of them for the worst, inevitably assuming that all of us tend to think our time was the best, everything went on a cesspit of perpetual. Of course, one may argue exactly that for the 1960s relative to subsequent decades, not just for the difference between rational resistance that flowered then and the endless and lawlessness that seeped after, but for the difference between what we were unwilling to argue is economic personnel and what we are now only too ready to beg in murdering participants. But that is another story.

I'm not a sucker for nostalgia, but I am not a sucker for "modernity" either—in particular when "modernity" is in one case largely across the spread of commercialism. I still remember how someone once told me proudly, by the day, fulltime opened to their plans, [illegible] the opinion ranked around several blocks, many nothing up as a rank of diners to be first in line. I thought of music and movies and images and the—I don't know—and despaired.

To this day, I still proudly insist that the best the pulverized shells that zoomed on the ground of the plaza at the least, literally zero, of Naga disappeared to make way for concrete ensure, painted such gaudy colors. The Naga City Hall, which used to be a model of its kind, which for another reason's sake of the world. But all that are built solidly to withstand time and the elements and up being solid or permanence. Some of them end up being showing and frantic, an issue in human consciousness. The showy "modern" is the most ephemeral of things; but I am glad that here in the Japanese cities are, they have not applied themselves to pursuing routine that measure the life span of those that have preceded them. Beneficiaries of the Japanese work ethic, and perfectionists, in a pre-massively-techno minds.

Ideal cities whether, in principle, are do not have a sense of the past because an ever-changing show, chart of their buildings, with residents they evoke a sense of something the neighborhood, they aspire to and physical traits of what were before, or whether are cities change down with resident they because are have an sense of the past. It's probably a chicken-and-egg issue. I still mourn the disappearance of the Jai Alai building. It wasn't the greatest example of architecture, but it had a charm all its own. Therefore in the world, yesterday is a thing in business, people and governments wanting to preserve every cause, in their patronage, or their interest. Here, until I still remember the married low jobs about laundry being applied by the decrepit noise of the Parthenon and saying, "What a backward people. It use had something like this in the Philippines, we'd have fixed it long ago." I don't know whether there is currently a jobs, in protests only to have do.

But it's good to up her shoreline in Bora City, in and a endless glimpse of Old Hops.

A miracle for Gina

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Bel Mendez
Officer-Columnist

Philippine Consular Authority administrator Evangelina Bellosura, who had crossed swords with Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, found a sympathetic ally in Dr. Norma Bonilla-Boswell, chair of the Makati Medical Center microbiology department and mother of two books on exercise. Her "Fit Exercises! The Pedro Penduko Way" will be published in Philadelphia this July. She has made it from 20 "evidence-based" workouts to exercises of old video cuts doctors, nurses and patients on them, she advocates a "Cocoma Lifestyle."

Boswell has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to name Bellosura from some of her professional colleagues in the province. Who said the 10-year PCIJ chief couldn't supervise the functioning of a study to determine whether coconut oil relieves cardiovascular disease, lower cholesterol and can be used worldwide as immunity and antiviral? The batch sent orange to spinach and blood testing, and Bellosura approved it "with an open-mindedness and willingness to learn." She also heavily endorsed Bellosura's round-the-aisling the new key head to ear pose to-toe "Cocoma Lifestyle" book just in time for Yuletide" wonderful cold season.

Unfortunately, Bellosura got caught in a controversy she never explored. And the Cocoma-smoking research into the proverbial muffled resilience of the coconut should be suppressed, as it would redound to the advantage of the pulpit of our impoverished coconut farmers. Bellosura, who was appointed by Estrada to replace Gina dos Santos Avecilla, is known to claim that she was ousted not because she had opposed the proposal supported by Secretary Yap to use P6.6 billions of coco levy funds to finance the Agriculture Department's Masagana 99-type Coconut Industry Investment Program (MCIIP). This project, which dates back to the Marcos martial, proposes to provide a 110,000-hectare hybrid-coconut planting program in Agusan del Sur, the latest to be proposed by businessmen-cronies from urban areas.

Secretary Yap hated dissenters carrying close Bellosura was not ousted one day to her objection to the AGSEB loan due to her years performance in office. He said he refused to kill very much in the planning stage, and among the details being studied is the sourcing of funds—either from the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) itself or from the Land Bank. The PCA could supply the funds by way of a study to determine whether coconut oil refers really contains to metabolic lauric monolaurin and can be used worldwide as immunity and antiviral. The batch sent orange to spinach and blood testing, and Bellosura approved it "with an open-mindedness and willingness to learn." She also heavily endorsed Bellosura's round-the-aisling the new key head to ear pose to-toe "Cocoma Lifestyle" book just in time for Yuletide" wonderful cold season.

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Tossed by the tempest

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

COMMENTATORS, moderators, programmers, Labels they all are, and there was a report Bonnie Abundance of those labels in the world watched the death of Pope John Paul II and the rest to the papacy of Pope Benedict XVI.

But labels are not without agenda. Too often, it even darker to shape perceptions about the labeler and the labeled. Labels also become a projection of our desire to have the object of our critique fit into our own agenda.

News, features, columns and commentaries, more especially from American media, were all abuzz with the death of Pope John Paul II and his "conservatism." Oh and it have to cite the obituaries now, his rejection of the advocates for women, anti-priest, married clergy, same-sex marriage, artificial contraception and abortion. And because of his "conservatism" he was a divisive figure, he caused the Catholic Church to be "divided."

There is a so-called rift in contemporary ecclesiology that is called reconciliation. We cannot but see where we classify human events and people under hard-and-fast categories. It is similar to the "conservatism" and "liberalism" in the political categories, thus drawing them be required to exist beyond their preconceptions. The common need for is a generalization.

Classifying labelled Dita's country into two extremes, the "conservatives" and the "liberals" is simplistic. Though not the first papal philosophy (Paul VI into voice), the later popular debunked the idea of a papacy exercised only from the advisors and global members of a political residence. By foreign this contained is understood by the Catholic Church's preferences for the down-trodden and the poor. In a sense when the late Bonnie Anderson was almost a parish to the supposedly more polished Pope. John Paul was like a voice in the wilderness calling out for a Salvation for the Fatherhood.

The last pontiff was also in a sense an apostle to declassify the Vatican status, something that was once by unimaginable before his time. The encyclopedia of the Second Vatican Council, of which papacy is a phenomenon that should not be missed out on. John Paul, while He also lived intensified the apostolic succession. One papabile, Jean Cardinal Bilé, the archbishop of Bordeaux, had been a papal candidate for South Korea, Burma and several other countries.

John Paul was hardly a conservative when it came to the youth. He saw his "World Youth Day" meetings will receive a historic recognition. I saw John Paul in the 1995 World Youth Day in Manila. Audiences is estimated at over. Despite being the old man that he already was then, he addressed the youth in homely, even in his gamely outgoing his voice in the form of music, and used the means of stage lights to emphasize his message. I have seen young people in Manila who have remained in fidelity to the Church because of the World Youth Day, a moderate device of evangelism, hardly the stuff of which conservatives made?

There are those that look at labeling Church-related details as conservative and liberal matters who come from the regions of the world where the popes are taught, even for a few patriotic members of their populations. John Paul once said that Asian Christ has disappeared from Europe. The greatest paradox of modern times is the decline of the Christian faith in the countries of Europe, the land of the apostles, the birthplace of Christianity itself. Christianity remained in many countries, especially where the communists, as Benedict XVI announced, is a Church that is "courageous, free and young"!

The children has brought to into the world of shallow labels and convenient thoughts which cannot fathom the great wisdom that the Church has handed down through generations to clergy.

Comments to montalvan.ch@edu.ph

A re-interment

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

OBITUARIES! April 28, a date will be held in Santo Domingo Church at 10 a.m., prior to the re-interment of Ms. Aurora Aragon Quezon, at Manila at the Quezon Memorial Shrine, next to the tomb of her husband. By reason of this ceremony, our thoughts will go to others, particularly those in the Manila and Angeles cities, to join us. And for those who knew or were associated with Ms. Quezon, we hope you will be able to join us as well. The National Historical Institute and many other personal and public agencies will be lending their kind or friendly assistance to make it possible for Ms. Quezon to rest in peace next to the tomb of her beloved husband.

She is being re-interred on April 28 because it is her death anniversary. In college, a professor once took me aside after class, and asked, how I was related to Ruth Quezon. I said she was my grandmother, "Ina," he replied, "you know, I was one of the many EP students who volunteered to join the marathon for her killers in 1948."

The killing and manhunt the professor referred to was the murder of Ruth Quezon Paterno in 1948. The Red campaign that began in November 1946 reached its peak in April 1948, with the anniversary of 1896's Pugad Lawin, widow of the former Philippine president, Commander Alexander Veterans, alias Kalibo, took two hundred men and launched an ambushing a small convoy on the Sierra Madre mountains and wound by a motorcade carrying Mrs. Quezon, her daughter, and several government officials. When the ambush ended, Mrs. Quezon, her daughter, the mayor of Angeles, and the governor of Pampanga and troops lay dead alongside the road. Although Veterans claimed a great victory, people throughout the islands, including many in Central Luzon, were outraged. Veterans anticipated his target's popular by President Quezon left a strong reaction, which continued after his death. And he widow represented the spirit of Philippine nationalism and resistance. Feeling the overwhelming indignation about the death of a national hero's wife and family, Taruc denied responsibility and said that the ambush was conducted without HUK approval. Despite his attempts to disclaim the assassination of Quezon's family, Taruc was given a death sentence, which was later commuted to life imprisonment. Taruc was released in 1954 by President Magsaysay, who was elected in part because of the widow's support.

As time progresses, however, many more questions. Evidently, the feasibility studies on the Agusan hybrid project were undertaken by executive but were by their PCA administrator Danilo Concepcion and by coco levy-funded corporations, such as the CIIF and Cocofed's unions. In fact, a cash flows was formed for us. By December 2004, however, Bellosura replaced Concepcion and, in no time, the approved loan project. If it was made by a foreign valley was Concepcion replaced and made instead a director of the CIIF. Bonilla's in have been happy if he remained in the PCA until it took off. Then you, I heard that Bellosura took to task not only the President. If she was in the course of poor performances and non-cooperation with Bonilla's groups, weren't those facts known to the Palace? Why did she suddenly become so concerned about a project that Yap, who is among GMA's favorite boys in the Cabinet, was very interested in?

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's silence and I were invited by mainstream press and TV host Betty Bibit to do a two-hour TV special on the recent rock events in Rome, along with Fr. James B. Reuter, singer and NGO activist Magda Kate Inocencio, and historian Ambeth Ocampo. As Betty planned it, the first hour was to be devoted to John Paul II and the second to the Pope Benedict XVI, but as it turned out, one hour was very SRO (almost everyone rated), there had to be a concerted effort to dub the talk to the non-Pope events so as aimed at participants in tomorrow Mrs. Aragon. Father Reuter opined that Benedict would uphold points of discussion even to be seen his own teacher Ratzinger.

At that program Gina de Venecia had a few caustic comments to make. She had remained in Italy for a week more after EDSA's party left for Manila. She wanted to have Congressman Ducats and her boy-bandmates to, who partaked in a of the Pope's Mass in Circo Massimo. She also visited a lot of spiritual healing. Her small group (she included social welfare secretary Dinky Soliman) visited a number of holy shrines in Rome, including the tomb of PPL and various places in Italy. One of those is the church of San Gregorio Armeno in Naples, where the relics of San Patricio, a virgin noble lady who lived 1,600 years ago and was known for her genius that he successfully post-Ave retrieved. Her group visited Sorrento, the birthplace of the Barbados, who take care of the shrine, showed them the dried blood of his Patricio is a relics. They learned that it liquefies on 16 May and 19 December. Gina and those in

Osmeña as president?

MAY I please point out a glaring error in the April 13 editorial ("Losing gracefully") of the INQUIRER. It mentioned something about the plan of President Carlos R Garcia to proclaim his candidate for vice president, Sergio Osmeña Jr,. as acting president until Garcia's protest could be resolved.

The editorial went on to say that Osmeña Jr. turned down the proposal even if it offered him a chance to become president even if only for a year. Osmeña could not have refused the offer because, in the first place, he was not Garcia's running mate. It was Gil Puyat.

I checked with lawyer Edilberto Gallares who served as executive secretary during the last few months of the Garcia presidency. He, too, is not aware of such a plan.

Of course, I am a subscriber (from a local outlet) of the INQUIRER.

—JOSE MA. ROCHA,
109 CPG East Ave.,
Mansana Heights,
Tagbilaran City

LETTERS

THERE is an account about the plan in Law Glenk's "The Third Philippine Republic." The "acting presidency" was offered to Osmeña, who ran for vice president as an independent, because he was viewed to have done better than Gil Puyat, Garcia's running mate under the Nacionalista Party banner. Based on other written accounts, it appears that the plan was not a well-kept secret even at that time. And if we may point out, the editorial did not refer to Osmeña as Garcia's running mate.—Ed.

Gov't must set example in reducing energy costs

THE GOVERNMENT is thinking of measures to save on the country's energy cost, but it is not really showing its citizens the way.

For example, street lights on national roads and local streets are left on day and night; government vehicles are used even for family errands; and daylight savings time has not been adopted, notwithstanding the fact that our country is blessed with so much sunlight and daylight. Indeed, how come the government is not keen in using this natural source to cut back on our energy expenses?

The proposal to reduce the store hours of malls and groceries is not practical. Entrepreneurs renting mall spaces depend on much needed sales to sustain their operations and keep them profitable. Limiting the business hours will mean laying off personnel due to lower sales. Besides, government has no business telling private enterprises how to run their operations.

Instead of limited store hours, we need groceries that operate from 9 p.m. to, maybe, 3 a.m. or 4 a.m., just like in other countries, to cater to the those who work at night and need to do their shopping late in the evening or early in the morning. With the option to shop late at night, one can avoid the usual day crowd and even help ease traffic in the vicinity of supermarkets.

Another way of saving energy is by getting rid of government cars with engine displacements of over 2 liters. There is no need for public officials to use Expeditions or cars with 8-cylinder engines, unless they just want to bloat their egos.

The need to save energy must be inculcated in the public mind by a sustained government campaign, which should continue even when there is no energy crisis.

—MIKE JOSE,
dosmiguel@spymac.com

Give patients the choice of medicines

WHILE I wholeheartedly agree with Lualhati Capistrano on the appallingly high prices of branded drugs (Letters, PDI, 4/11/05), I think there were some glaring irregularities in her understanding of drugs and a free market economy.

For one thing, you cannot substitute a powerful antibiotic like the one found in Zromax with generic amoxicillin, especially since the rampant misuse of antibiotics in the Philippines has led to many powerful "super-bugs" that are already immune to the inferior antibiotics.

Also, the laws of a free market dictate that the government should not regulate the price of branded goods. And the Philippines is a tiny market for these multinational drug companies; they will never go bankrupt just because of the Philippines.

But what the government can do and, in fact, already does, is import the cheaper "generic" versions of medicines.

Therefore, the most important thing is for the government to strictly enforce the law that requires all doctors to write the generic name of drugs in their prescriptions. Doctors who do not do this and instead fool the consumers into buying the branded counterparts should be barred from practicing medicine. And the consumers should finally be smart and start buying the generic equivalents.

—MICHAEL RASHKAE,
rashkae@gmail.com

Across the NATION

6 NPA rebels, 2 cops slain in Bulacan

SAN RAFAEL, Bulacan—Six suspected New People's Army rebels and two policemen were killed in a separate encounter and police checkpoint attack in two towns in Bulacan yesterday, reports from the police and the military said.

In San Miguel town, reports from the Army's 7th Infantry Division said at least six rebels were killed during a clash with government troops in Barangay Bulalong. The encounter broke out at 5:30 a.m. and ended past 10 a.m.

The slain rebels, who have yet to be identified, belonged to an unnumbered unit led by Mauricio Trinidad, also known as Ka Bino, of the NPA front "Isabelo," said 2nd Lt. Oliver Bird, a company commander of the 56th Infantry Battalion.

The 56th has yet to confirm the deaths still.

Soldiers recovered an M-16 rifle, a handheld radio, food and backpacks at the encounter site.

According to soldiers, villagers gave them information on the NPA presence.

In San Rafael town, two policemen were killed and two others were wounded when suspected NPA rebels staged a police checkpoint in Barangay Sampalucan at about 10 a.m. Sunday.

Police believed the rebels staged the checkpoint to retaliate following reports that six NPA rebels were killed in San Miguel, about 30 km from this town.

Reports said SPO3 Antonio Pineda and SPO1 Dexter Sotelo were killed as at least six suspected NPA rebels aboard a jeepney stalled the checkpoint they were manning. Their companions—PO2 Jericho Bedon and PO1 Juan Umandap—were wounded and taken to the Bulacan Medical Center in Malolos town.

Police reports said the victims, members of the 304th provincial police mobile group, were on alert because of the military operations against the NPA in San Miguel.

Reports said the rebels who attacked the checkpoint were wearing blue police camouflage uniforms. Police recovered empty shells of .45 cal pistol and M-14 and M-16 rifles near the checkpoint.

Arrested

In Calbayog City, Samar, two suspected NPA members were arrested during an early morning raid on Friday, according to 1st Lt. Reinerius Lee, commanding officer of the 43rd Infantry Battalion.

Ramiro Pasaol and Avero Velasco were reportedly sleeping in a bahay-kubo (nipa hut) when soldiers surrounded it. Soldiers found explosives and firearms in the hut, Lee said.

Pasaol and Velasco were immediately brought to an undisclosed safehouse for interrogation. "After that, we will bring them to a court of justice as well," Lee alleged, presumably of firearms against them.

Confiscated from the two were several guns and a pairs of blouse and pants.

Lee said the villagers tipped them off on the presence of the alleged rebels.

Military operations in Eastern Visayas had been intensified on orders of Major Justin Delgado, commanding general of the 8th Infantry Division, based in Catbalogan, Samar, as part of their efforts to end the insurgency in the region.

Delgado had announced that he would solve the region's insurgency—one of the most active in the country—within six months to a year. Carmela Reyes and Rosette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk; Jose Gabitera, PDI Visayas Bureau

Boncodin: Malampaya fund less than ₱600M

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Palawan is getting less than P600 million from the Malampaya fund this year, way below the figure in the interim agreement signed by the provincial government and the national government, according to Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin.

The interim agreement paved the way for the release of P1.2 billion for Palawan, representing the balance for half of the 40 percent local government share from the Camago-Malampaya Natural Gas-to-Power Project.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had released P600 million just before the May 2004 elections.

The first tranche of projects approved by former energy Secretary Vicente Perez was P600 million. It was supposed to be released after the approval of the Department of Budget and Management for the details and the projects would have to be reviewed by Malacañang.

She said two issues were involved in the release of the amount. The listing of projects and the amount.

"But was the transaction void? We have to review it thoroughly," she said in an interview with radio DZRH.

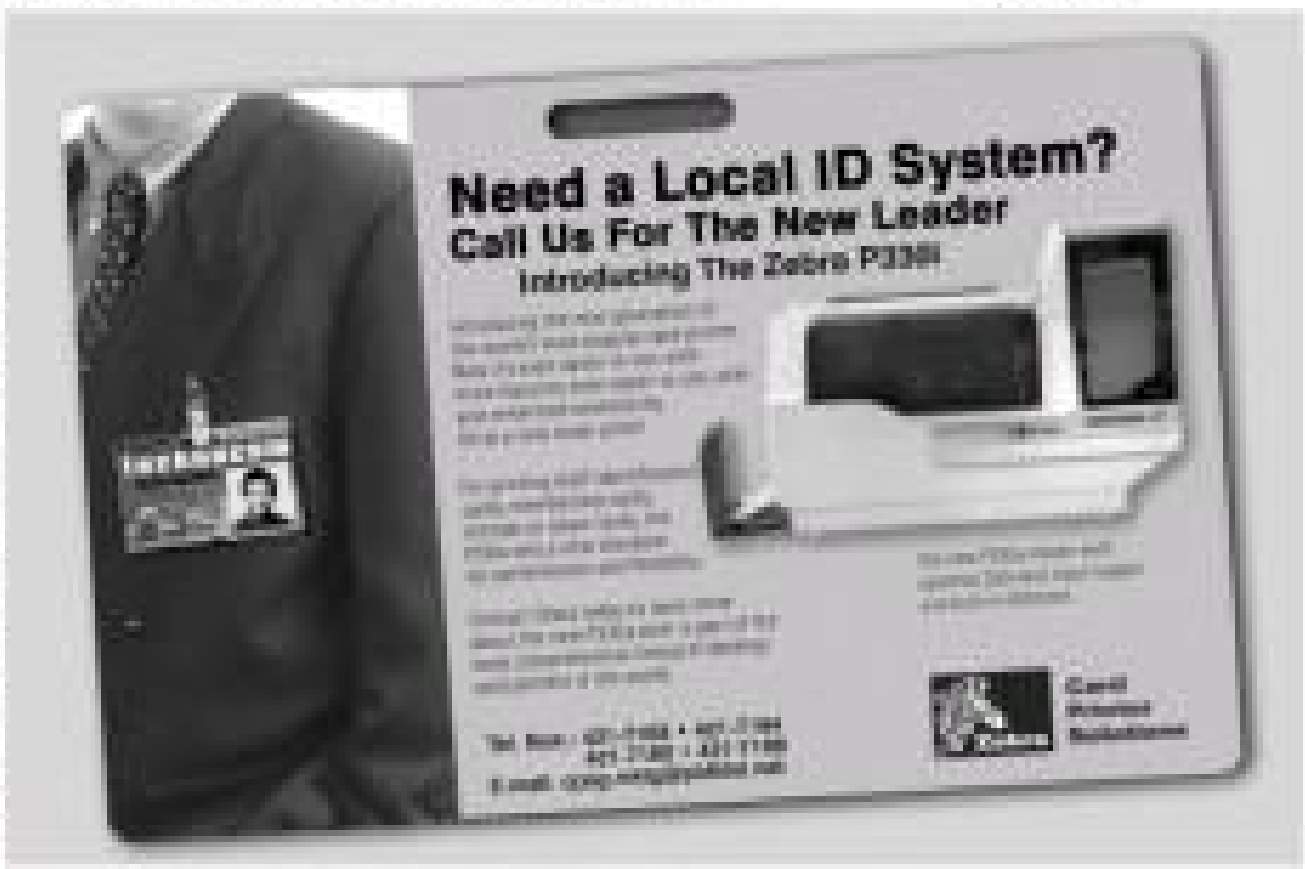
The projects should benefit more people and have high impact, she said.

She said she had talked with Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla about the Palawan share and was told that Lotilla had not seen the project listing yet because the endorsement was made by Perez before he left the government on March 16.

"I was not aware of it," Lotilla had said in reference to Boncodin's statements.

"It would be an insult to former energy secretary Perez if secretary Lotilla will not endorse it," Reyes said.

He said there was nothing in the agreement that the projects would be reviewed by Malacañang because it only involved an endorsement from the Department of Energy. Aphil Bacelo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau



Ilocos power firm says it's not overcharging users

LAOAG CITY—An official of an electric cooperative in Ilocos Norte said the cooperative did not overprice its consumers contrary to a supposed finding that it collected some P120 million in excess charges over an eight-year period (mid-'93 to mid-'97).

"Our books are open for review, evaluation and investigation," said Rodolfo Pascual, Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative general manager.

Pascual said Inec has yet to receive the result of the investigation that the Energy Regulatory Commission conducted on the cooperative's power charges.

The ERC did not inform the cooperative that it was under investigation, saying the commission probably based its evaluation on reports that the power firm had submitted previously, he said.

Inec submits various reports from invoices, sample bills and payment receipts to the ERC monthly. These records are the bases of the ERC crew(s) when they visit our area anyway to audit our power [of power costs]," Pascual said.

The ERC was supposed to issue its observations on the reports submitted Cabinet six months from receipt of Inec documents, but Pascual said the ERC had yet to issue its comments.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Rodfrando Marcos Jr. earlier announced that Inec had overcharged its consumers by P120 million, citing the ERC investigation on the cooperative's books of accounts.

Residential consumers comprise 91 percent of Inec's 105,372 (not 110,000 as earlier reported) consumers.

The Ilocos Norte provincial board, through Board Member Mariano Marcos II, earlier came out with similar findings of Inec's records.

Governor Marcos had said the ERC, through its chair, former Cabinet Rep. Rodolfo Albano Jr., would benefit from the result of the investigation of our work.

But Merlo Diaz, president of Inec's employees association, said Albano had told her that the ERC was still reviewing Inec's documents.

"I called up Chairman Albano to inquire about the supposed result because Inec employees were greatly disturbed by the reports coming out. In the media. Albano assured me that the ERC was still reviewing our papers," Cha said.

Quoting Albano, Diaz said: "Don't worry the evaluation has not been finalized. He might have overview and re-compute the figures."

Rosita Bumanglag, Inec finance manager, said Inec had been transparent about its records, transactions and operational systems when the cooperative's officials appeared before the provincial board's inquiry to explain its operations.

"We answered, point by point, the various issues that the board members raised. But we could not reconcile our figures with the calculations they made because we used different formulas," Bumanglag said.

She said Inec has not changed its power rates from 1991 to October 2000.

The rates were adjusted only in November last year when the Republic Act 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) of 2001 was implemented.

Under RA 9136, electric cooperatives are required to "unbundle" their rates or itemize the various charges according to cost and function to reflect the true cost of power being provided to different consumer types. Cristina Arradaza, AFP Northern Luzon Bureau

LADY JUSTICE ICON

THE 10TH National Convention of Lawyers adopts a unique "Lady Justice" when it opened in Baguio City this week. The goddess icon is patterned after a post Hispanic bamboo granary idol that are often portrayed bearing an open hazelnut. —NIÑO CAMUS

Trial of journalist slay suspect starts

DAGUPAN CITY—It appears that the Jaramillo slay case is finally moving forward as a court in Cebu starts today the formal trial against the accused suspects.

Gennaro Ramalerio, radio of Edgar Ramalerio, told the Inquirer that Judge Ramon Codilla of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 19 of Cebu City will hear the case against former police officer Guillermo Pagdilao.

Ramalerio was on his way home together with one of the witnesses when he was shot murdered by Pagdilao.

Pagdilao was subsequently charged before the court here but the death of one of the witnesses, Allan Amores, prompted the Dumaguete court to ask for a change of venue of the hearings.

Mrs. Ramalerio cited security reasons and lack of confidence in the local courts. Decision to take case previously heard in the case of Judge Roland Gonzaga RTC Dumaguete del Sur.

The Supreme Court has approved the request on Feb. 14 and transferred the case to Cebu.

The SC also directed the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) here to bring Pagdilao to the hearing in the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center (PDRC) in Lahug, Cebu City.

Mrs. Ramalerio said a team of prosecutors formed by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez will represent the family.

The Supreme Court also directed Codilla to finish the trial within three months, she said.

They requested the court to finish the trial and issue a decision on the charges against Pagdilao by June.

Meanwhile, the local state prosecutor's office here recommended no bail for the three suspects in the set of killers in the charge sheet filed before the local court.

But suspects Mohammad Abdulaie Maulana, alias Mafia, Mohsin Arabit, alias Mok and another suspect remained at large because the court had just issue warrants for their arrest.

Maulana and Arabit were identified by PO1 Dondie to Pandia of the provincial police command as the one who shot and killed Amores.

Pandia said he encountered the fleeing suspects along Rizal St. a few minutes after Amores was killed.

He said the suspects even fired at him and hit one of his fingers.

Pandia said he believed the suspects thought he was responding to the incident.

Several witnesses also supported Pandia's claim about the identity of two of Amores's killers.

But Maulana, in his counter affidavit, said he could not have participated in the killing of Amores because he was attending the wedding of his younger sister in Barangay Binabalian in Dumaguete del Sur, about 40 kilometers from here, when the incident happened. Myrnan Pabela Cruz, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Sorsogon summit examines environment

SORSOGON CITY—Concerns about the increasing [unintelligible] in coastal and marine ecosystems in Bicol and Mogallanes towns in Sorsogon led environmental groups in the province to hold an environmental summit on May 4-5.

Protected wildlife head Benedicto Bonpal Jr. said the summit is especially important for Sorsogon as it hosts various ecosystems that [unintelligible] need to be preserved.

The Sorsogon Coalition for Environment, composed of media, environment, government and corporate entities, will hold the first provincial summit in Bicol to look into the cutting of trees, illegal fishing, illegal fishpond operation, solid waste management, pollution, and drug prostitution, said Public Information Agency Sorsogon manager Lino Gubil.

The move was an offshoot of the Fil-Quezon Bicol Media Environmental Forum spearheaded by Tarzan Balbacon held in October last year, she said.

The recent tragedy that struck Quezon province also hastened the holding of the activity, Gubil added. Bobby Q. Labadan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

AUBC caging scheduled in Dumaguete

NEGROS Oriental will host another prestigious international event, the Asian University Basketball Championship (AUBC), on June 13-18 in Dumaguete City featuring five foreign teams and three top local squads.

Details of the tournament were finalized during a recent meeting between BSP secretary General Godiano Lim and the AUBC organizing committee led by Negros Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz and provincial Sports Director.

Also in the meeting were Negros Oriental Vice Gov. Jose "Joe" Baldado, Provincial General Services Officer Pompe Marmon, Provincial Administrator Marilou Bito, Provincial Accountant Teddy Neves, Provincial Sports Coordinator Buddy Remilla and Treasurer Romeo of the Provincial Treasurer's Office.

"It is just a fitting follow-up to the successful hosting of the National Students Basketball Championship. This event is part of the Memorandum of Agreement with Governor Arnaiz to boost sports development and the tourism industry of the said province," said Lim.

The foreign field is made up of South Korea, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong and Thailand.

The Philippines will be represented by the top Cebu squads, the National Students Basketball Championships—University of Perpetual Help-Cebu System, Philippine Maritime Institute and National University.

The AUBC is an annual event of the Asian Universities Basketball Federation where Cebu is the only host city. FIBA president Patrick Baumann designated the honorary chair with South Korean basketball legend Shin Dong-pa, China's Lu Gui Jie, Indonesia's Hendrawan Sidarto, Thailand's Dr Pornsan and Chinese Taipei's Wang Jen-an as board members.

P'que Jets slip past Spring

FORMER Red Bull player Rollie Bardillon sank a triple in the last two seconds to power the Parañaque Jets past the Spring Cooking Oil-backed Laguna Spring, 68-67, Saturday in the opening opener of the 2005 Petrosense-NBC invitational basketball championship at the Cuneta Astrodome.

The Spring of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and Laguna Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro led throughout until applause set in with until Bardillon knocked in the game-winning triple... his fourth for the day.

NBC commissioner Joey Mariñé graced the opening ceremony.

Down by seven, 66-63, going into the last two minutes, the Jets rallied to provide a fitting gift to Vice Mayor and actor/TV host Arjo Atayde, who celebrated his birthday Saturday.

Only one TV performer—Antonio Aquitania, ended up for the Jets while Richard Gomez sat on the bench in street clothes.

The 2kG, who clinched the PCP Lobstain Distiller national training team two months ago, drew loud cheers from the big crowd which watched the opening of the tourney sponsored by Petrosense, Solpitre Lime, Spring Cooking Oil, Cebu Pacific, Philtranco, Asiol, Mellon, Isuzuki, Hanan's Spring, Bic, Eastern Insurance, Diego Silang, Inciyelas, Prime Channel, Ping Ding Lechon, Starview Park Hotel and Holiday Plaza Cebu.

Action in the BA-sanctioned event resumes on April 30 with the southern division opening pairing Mayor Lourenzo Cruz's Bigan Chowder against the Cagayan de Oro Board Runner Mountain Demons/ Los Antonio Calloggo as the Xavier University group GBO.

Parañaque 68—Bardillon 18, Mariñé 10, Cabanero 7, Tolentino 6, Lopez 5, Mangun 5, Reyes 5, Bautista 5, Sanchez 5, Bernardo 3, Ferdinand 2, Tolentino 2, Aquitania 0, Rivera 0.

Laguna 67—Salazar 18, Reyes 11, Domingo 10, Ramirez 9, Santos 8, Fresnan 3, Adlaw 2, Nolga 2, Ramirez 1, Nolga 1, Nolga 0, Nolga 0, Joaquin, Ramirez, Lopez 0.

Quarters: 16-24, 36-42, 47-54, 68-67.

NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla makes the ceremonial toss between Laguna Spring's Chris Corbin (left) and Parañaque's Randy Lopez. Also in picture are Panasonic Phils. president Rodolfo Perez and NBC chair Louie Borrull.

Zamboanga judokas bag 3 golds

CEBU (CT)—Powered by members of the national team, Zamboanga dominated the opening day of the Philippine National Individual Judo Championships, winning three of the eight gold medals stalled Friday at the University of San Carlos Gymnasium here.

National players Nancy Rivas, Junzi Pedro and Armelli Lucero topped their respective weight categories for Zamboanga, which also won two silvers and five bronzes at the start of the three-day tournament that serves as a qualifying event for the coming Southeast Asian Games.

Rivas, bronze medalist in the 2003 Vietnam SEA Games, defeated Zamboanga teammate and fellow national Oliver Franco in the finals of the 44kg to 48kg class. Designer Chiquito of Baguio and Ruby Palacios of Davao settled for the bronze medals.

Zamboanga's third gold came from the men's 66 kg class courtesy of Lucero, Vietnam SEA Games silver medalist, who stopped GEN Gendrowel's Lloyd Jamisa in the final. The bronze went to Socrates Bartolete of De La Salle University and Randy Gamboag of Davao.

The other 30 team members who took gold medals were City College of Manila's Gilbert Ramirez who topped the men's 73 kg class; Montebuyan's Jah Gay Limosnes, who dominated the women's 63 kg; Solomon, winner of the women's 70 kg, and Ubonan's Ruth Bugtalag (women's 70 kg).

Marc Balanquan of Davao took the gold in the men's 100 kg and above category where there was no participant from the 10 teams.

SPORTSWATCH

2nd Pasay Mayor's Cup

THE SECOND Pasay City Mayor's Cup, an annual qualifying event for the benefit of needy residents, will make the support of big companies headed by president/owner Dan Miguel Dee. The major sponsors are Columbia Advantage, JSB Prime Holdings, Federal Land, Tanduay and Mount Pagdanan with Petron as... The Grand Place Hotel/The Heritage Hotel Manila, Sonia International, Solar Entertainment and Amazing Theater as minor backers. Also supporting the event set April 29 at the Villamor Golf Club courses are Nutrasal Plant, Tan Corporation, Talmak, Royal Star Aviation and Asian Airlines.

Cojuangco at PSA Forum

THE BATTLE of PSA Forum will have no less than Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Jose Cojuangco as special guest in tomorrow's session at the Manila Pavilion. The former Tarlac congressman is expected to tackle the latest issues and matters concerning local sports, from the controversy surrounding the country's access to basketball to the coming Southeast Asian Games. To join Cojuangco in this public sports program sponsored by Red Bull Supreme, Olympian Paguio and colleague SLEM Sports Radio is Table Tennis Association of the Philippines (Ttaap) president Victor Sudiacmo.

LEAD camp set May 13-16

THE BYSBL Basketball Association (PBA) coach-to-be Weerasak and Fonzie Magsanoc along with Bonbonbuhayan Alex Compton and Pastor Pierre Pantaleon are the featured speakers in the International Basketball Academy's LEAD camp set May 13 to 16 at the Calbiga Re-Creation Center in Lambian, Laguna. LEAD Camp is not only open to Country Basketball School participants but other kids who want to learn the values of leadership, excellence, attitude and discipline. Interested parties may contact Ren-BA at 832-1736, 0917-5482928 Email to: lbarcena@yahoo.com or e-mail at leo_phil@yahoo.com for registration to the LEAD camp and the upcoming Coach T Basketball School classes on April 26 and May 2.

Ratnatan finals today

LIFE SAVERS rockers and breakers from different countries converge today at the Bulgan Bikaya Cockpit for the championship round of the "P1 Million Pakistan 4 Cock Derby" starting at 9 a.m., with more than 40 fights lined up. Competing today are participants with two wins each after the eliminations held at Bantaya Cockpit, Triangle Cockpit Makapaga, Libe Coliseum, Boulevard, Batasa Cockpit, Mayuyapot Cockpit, Balintawag Circle Cockpit, Lipa Gamers and Sports Center, among others. Likewise, 17 new participants will battle four rounds each today. Meanwhile, the much-awaited "Million Cup 4 Cock Derby" finally unfolds on Wednesday, April 27, with six less than 80 fights scheduled. Interested parties may call 833-7576 and 833-1838.

GCAP 7-cock derby up

GCAP MC and fighting cocks of the fully recovered Lt. Pilar Coliseum tonight when the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) 7-Cock Derby gets going at 7 p.m. Sponsored by Sagupan Complex 2000. Participants are presented in their first multi-cockers since only three derbies are left before the first ever GCAP Cocker of the Year is finally known. Sonny Alonzo of Las Piñas is the current leader with his arm's against All Saints leading with 57 points. Trailing him are Rodolfo Lim (Bonifacio Subdivision) 39, Oreo Cuenca and Dandy Ortiz 29 each, and Angel Patrick Jimenez (Compostela 2000) 25 each. Lim (Cove 6 Pogs, 25 each, Wilfredo Ibe and Company 1.00 All Will Lotteria, 23.50, Tomas Cruz & the 39-cock elimination round, while the championship is on Wednesday. For other inquiries, please contact 833-3810 and 913-1960.

Hybrid rice succeeds in S. Leyte

By Joel Arriaz
PDI Visayas Bureau

MAASIN CITY—The success of the two-intensification programs of the provincial government here has made Southern Leyte the number one rice producer in Eastern Visayas.

The province has also been recognized by the Department of Agriculture as the region's best performer in commercialization of hybrid rice, according to DA regional director Leo Cabrido.

Using hybrid "Mapanit" and "Tuyo" seeds planted in about 2,000 hectares, rice production of the province almost doubled. From 79 cavans to 125 to 140 cavans per hectare, Cabrido said.

Southern Leyte's success in hybrid rice production made Eastern Visayas second only to Davao in the implementation of the program nationwide, Cabrido said.

He said that Rosario Lerias has also been invited to share the best practice of the province in the Philippine Hybrid Rice Conference in Singapore and in the Science City in Muñoz in Nueva Ecija.

Launched last year, the provincial government-initiated P1 million for "Option 50 plus" or the rice intensification program. The amount was used to procure fertilizers that farmers had to pay for after the cropping season.

"The farmer is receive the cost for the sustainability of the program which the farmers can pay in goods. We should eliminate our culture of dole," said Lerias.

But many farmers were apprehensive because of the high cost of seeds. A cavan of hybrid rice seeds, which is good for nine hectares, costs P2,000 while in local rice only costs P1,000 per cavan.

To address this concern, Lerias urged the mayors and municipal agriculture officers in the province to tentatively form cooperative to explain to the farmers the advantages of adopting the new technology in rice production.

BACK TO NORMAL
Children play at the fishport in Infanta town in Quezon, one of the areas in eastern Luzon that was devastated by four typhoons in December 1994. Hundreds of more residents were killed during the calamities. EDGAR LANSANG

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Leyte lawmaker wants to divide province . . .

By Joey A. Galeras
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Leyte Rep. Carmelo Cari Zafy (SK/DU) said she has only the best intentions for filing a bill creating a new province in Eastern Visayas composed of the outer towns of her congressional district.

She said she wanted to divide Leyte because it is "too big a province," if the fifth district is a separate province, it will spur progress like what happened to Biliran when it became a separate province in 1992, Zafy said.

Leyte has a land area of 5,715.80 square kilometers with 43 towns, two cities and five component districts.

The province, which has a population of more than 1.5 million, is classified as first class with an income of more than P120 million as of 2000.

Biliran, with 22 municipalities, was a sub-province of Leyte until it became a separate province on May 11, 1992. Southern Leyte was also a part of Leyte but became an independent province in 1959.

Cari filed House Bill 10766 on Feb. 2, creating Western Leyte, with Baybay as its capital town. The other towns in the district are Abuyog, Hilongos, Hindang, Matalom, Inopacan, Javier, Mahaplag and Bato.

Pending

The bill is now pending before the Senate committee on local government chaired by Negros Oriental Gov. Emilio Macias.

Records of the provincial development office show that these nine towns have a population of 350,000 and a combined land area of 1,883.50 sq. km. Its estimated income as of 2002 was P474.2 million.

Except for Baybay, which is classified as a first class town, the other municipalities either belonged to third or fourth class. Baybay is home to the Leyte State University, formerly the Visayas State College of Agriculture (Visca). The region's foremost agricultural learning institution.

Requisites

Under the Local Government Code of 1991, a province must be created if it has an average annual income of not less P20 million based on 1991 constant prices and either of the following requisites: a contiguous territory of at least 2,000 sq. km. as certified by the Land Management Bureau, or, a population of not less than 250,000.

The code also stipulates that the creation of a new province should not reduce the land area, population, and income of the mother province to less than the minimum requirements, which the law had prescribed.

Cari's bill enjoys the support of her sisters, Leyte's first district Rep. Remedios Oreña who co-authored the bill.

Cari, who is now on her second term, accused that her proposal was not "politically motivated."

"But I'm sure as proponent, my term is poised for re-election (that development will result these towns rather fast. And I believe we can address that if we become a province," she said.

Cari belongs to the Lakas-Laban wherein many political bailiwick is in the fifth district. The clan hails from Baybay, the biggest town in the district in terms of population, land area and income.

Cari had earlier filed a bill converting Baybay into a city (the earned the town as its name for nine years before she was elected congresswoman in 1998.

Leyte's Fourth is composed of Tacloban, Biliran, Southern Leyte, Samar, Eastern Samar and Northern Samar. It is considered to be one of the country's most depressed regions.

. . . but in Quezon, officials oppose split

LUCENA CITY—At least three Quezon officials have expressed opposition to the reintroduction in Congress of the proposed division of the province into Quezon del Norte and Quezon del Sur Sr.

"That's a very divisive and contentious issue that our people can't afford, especially during this time of economic displacement. Once we start discussing matters to create small provinces we are talking of dividing our province and our people," said Board Member Kelly Bonoy.

He suggested that the proposed separation of the province be temporarily shelved.

Quezon is considered the largest province in the country.

The four Quezon representatives, Lorenzo Tañada III, Rafael Nantes, Camilo Saurez, and Proceso Alcala have refiled House Bill 2002.

The proposal was started by Nantes and former senator and Rep. Wigberto Tañada in July 8, 2004 during the 11th Congress.

His bill would also off a "Quezon del Sur" from the original province of 1.71 million people living in 9 Districts and Lucena City.

It would have 22 municipalities and Tayabas town as capital. The remaining towns and one city will comprise "Quezon del Norte" with Lucena City as still the capital.

The proponents argued that the legislation would hasten the economic development of both provinces, particularly the South district, home to Lamon Bay area.

Board Member Eladio Faustino, said if the division of the province materializes, the southern part of the province, specially Lamon Bay area, would soon be in the list of the country's poor provinces because of limited source of income.

"All businesses that operates in Quezon are confined in the province's first and second districts. The third and fourth districts in south Quezon will live miserably if they (are) separated," explained Faustino, who hails from Mauban town in the first district.

"That proposal only serves gerrymandering purposes. A politician would find it easy to control a small area. But that would worsen poverty in the region," he said.

Board Member James Reyes also said the politicians just want to have a small campaign area. "The proposal is definitely and a futile exercise in this province's economy of hardship and poverty." Ovelle T. Bladas Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

DFA official strangled by robbers

(Story on page A1)

was strangled, suggesting the intruders had had previous encounters, officials said.

"They entered the house wearing shirts to hide their faces because the victim might have known them," said Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO).

Running for help

While the intruders were on the upper floor, Leticia, 51, escaped and dashed to a nearby police community precinct to ask for help.

But the killers were gone by the time the police arrived.

The robber found was still visibly wounded around Galvez' face and neck.

Razon said the bride-to-be (the hallmarks of an abyan-bahay (porch-climbing) gang operation, although police had yet to determine what items were taken from the house.

Razon was the second public servant Isolan in Metro Manila in recent weeks. Former Pasig City Rep. Henry Lanot was shot dead in a restaurant two weeks ago. His murder is still unsolved.

Routine studied

"We found out that the robbery was pulled off by three-abyan-bahay malefactors," Razon said. "When Leticia opened the door, they pounced on her, gagged and bagged her."

But Razon said "we will also look at other motives."

He said the men had tied Razon' hands, then strangled her to her bed.

Her maid's had been taped shut, police said.

"They may have studied their routine ... that at 5:30 a.m., Leticia Razon would open the door and come out of the house to sweep," said Senior Supt. Javier Gutierrez, chief of the Makati Police Department.

Scaled the gate

The intruders had apparently climbed over the house's green gate, over which it was easy to jump, said Gutierrez.

Leticia, who also worked at the Department of Foreign Affairs as an officer in the strategic planning and policy section, was brought to the Orpital ng Makati, where she was treated for a gash in her neck.

She was discharged at 1 p.m., the hospital staff said.

She was too shocked to exercise their verbal involved, said Senior Supt. Asher Ballon, chief of the National Capital Region-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

Diplomats in disbelief

A career diplomat, Alicia Razon spent almost half her life in government service.

Malacañang denounced the killing of Razon.

"We condemn this brutal slaying. The police are under instructions to leave no stone unturned to investigate the case and bring the perpetrators to justice," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

Expressing shock, Foreign Secretary Siazon to Domido said: "We abhor these acts of violence and hope and pray that those responsible for the crime will be arrested and prosecuted."

US Embassy spokesperson Karen Holley expressed disbelief.

"You're kidding ... How awful," Holley said.

Japanese Embassy spokesperson Hideo Ogawa said: "My gosh! She worked closely with the embassy. She was very eager in discussing issues with us. She was very helpful to the embassy and supported us."

'A morbid scene'

The sisters, both single, were the only ones who lived in the house, police said. Razon and Liberty did not have any security.

They had a helper, a woman, who came in every now and then when called to clean the house.

She will be invited for questioning, said Dollisa.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay arrived at the crime scene in slippers at 10:30 a.m.

"Gigising ba'ko [dinatal the room ... Parang nagpapalakas ng loob [It seemed like they were trying to steel their nerves]. It was a morbid scene," said Binay.

Reporters were barred from entering the house.

"It appears that the robbers did not take everything valuable ... not everything that could be taken, because I saw a VCD player inside the room," the mayor added.

From the way the attack was carried out, it was apparent that the killers had studied their subjects well, Dollisa said.

Task force formed

The Philippine National Police formed a task force to investigate the killing.

The group included investigators from the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, the NCRPO Regional Intelligence and Investigation Division, the Southern Police District Scene-of-the-Crime Operatives and the Makati Police Criminal Investigation Division, with Gutierrez as team leader.

PNP Director General Avisro Lomibao also ordered a crackdown on abyer-bahay gangs.

Night and dawn patrols

He also ordered crime prevention patrols by community volunteers, "especially during the night and dawn," PNP spokesperson Inspector Siegfe Leopoldo Batandi said.

Police said they had mobilized their informants to try and track down the killers.

They would go from "house to house" to ask neighbors what they heard or saw in the area at the hour of the break-in and killing, police said.

"We never heard of her having any problems ... She was very efficient, very quiet, a hard worker," foreign Undersecretary Franklin Ebdalin said. "With a expert [Foreign Judge A. del Puerto

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'A brilliant, efficient and quiet diplomat'

(Story on page A1)

Makati home immediately upon hearing the news on the radio.

Friend of 20 years

"I can't understand why this happened. She doesn't have any enemies," Ebdalin said.

Razon was a career official for more than 10 years.

They had been friends that long, Ebdalin said, as he and Razon took the difficult foreign service exams at the same time.

"She was the valedictorian. She was number one," Ebdalin said.

1995 controversy

The daughter of a former diplomat, Razon also served as ambassador to New Zealand and Vietnam.

As assistant secretary, Razon handled Philippine affairs with China, Brunei, New Zealand, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Pakistan, Ebdalin said.

But it was the controversy over Flor Contemplacion that was attributed in many a Filipino memory.

The hanging caused a diplomatic upheaval.

Public outrage

The case was highly emotional for many Filipinos, who considered Contemplacion a symbol of the "neglected maid" story.

Amid public outrage over the hanging, then President Fidel Ramos ordered the "immediate and indefinite recall" of Alicia Razon from Singapore.

The move announced in a downgrading of diplomatic relations between Singapore and the Philippines.

Then Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo resigned. His resignation was soon followed by that of Labor Secretary Nieves Confesor.

Razon served a 90-day preventive suspension, together with Consul General Reynaldo Catapang and more than a dozen other labor and embassy officials whom the Ramos-era Commission said had been negligent in dealing with Filipino workers in Singapore.

The commission ordered the filing of administrative charges against Razon and the others.

Razon was cleared when the Ombudsman dismissed the charges of "neglect of duty and inefficiency and incompetence in the performance of official functions." Sources: PNP archives, www.dfa.gov.ph and http://www.pinoy-ww.org/90s/singapore.html

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ROOF SHINGLES
(How well do you know algae-resistant asphalt shingles?)
"Why do people want shingles to stay clean?"
Answer: Shingles look distinctive, give a finished look, and complete the architectural style desired for the house. It can work aesthetics.
"What is shingles can defeat this goal?"
Answer: Through the years, algae can mean the roof is highly humid areas.
"What happens to roofs infected with algae?"
Answer: Roofing materials that are exposed to high humidity get discolored and stained. This is not use only for shingles but also for other types of roofs.
These dark stains are algae growth. They can cause the entire roof. After some years and make the roof look ugly indeed.
"How do we prevent algae from entering the roof?"
Answer: To eliminate algae growth, Certainteed produces Algae Resistant with zinc/gac.
"How are shingles made algae-resistant?"
Answer: Shingle surfaces are covered with ceramic granules in gray color.
In left shingles, these granules are combined with copper oxide. The copper leaches gradually over time, especially when it rains, and kills algae organisms that come in contact with shingles.
With this protection, CertainTeed AR shingles help maintain the natural beauty, color and distinctive appeal of your roof for years.
"Why is it worth your money to invest in AR shingles?"
Answer: An important part in the appeal of your house comes from your roof. It represents more than 30% of its exterior.
A roof that is unprotected from algae attack often looks more like decorative. The roof is stained and loses its beauty and natural look.
"Instead of buying AR shingles, may we just apply paints with algicide on shingles?"
Answer: Paints with algicide may easily wash off concrete and metal roofs without any effects. But then numerous composition may damage the integrity and performance of asphalt shingles.
"Do shingle manufacturers provide warranties on roofs coated with algicide paints?"
Answer: Because of the possible harm on the asphalt, asphalt shingles manufacturers will withdraw the warranty on their roofing materials applied with such paints.
"Does algicide coating of shingles offer long term solution to algae attacks?"
Answer: Application on shingles of paints will algicide offers limited protection from algae attacks.
These paints are brushed on the exterior of ceramic granules. With the direct exposure of the roof to heat, cold, wind and rain, the paint may peel and wash off the granules, unlike the AR shingles' copper oxide which is unaffected within the ceramic granules.
"What models of CertainTeed are Algae-Resistant (AR)?"
Answer: The following shingle models have algae resistance and a warranty of 10 years: CT30 SR and Landmark AR Styles. The following have a warranty of 15 years: Grand Manor, Carriage House, Presidential Shake, Landmark TL.
"But your AR shingles may be more expensive than others."
Answer: We are the exclusive distributors of the largest manufacturer of shingles in the world - CertainTeed (USA).
We are the largest volume in the industry and carry the most number of models and colors. What we save from our volumes, we pass on to you as discount.
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'Jueteng' trio dictate on PNP posts?

From page A1

month, shrinking the police officers' take from P8 million to P5 million. That's on top of what they get from the operators, also estimated to be in the millions.

Sustained by the poor, jueteng has reportedly become a P30-billion-a-year industry which grew unabated after government lost its bulwark still.

Arroyo-reborn jueteng retained its legally rampant outlaw Pangasinan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Batangas, Quezon, Rizal, Bulacan and Laguna, according to the police official.

Allegations that control over these Joseph Estrada-created huge payoffs from jueteng lords led to his impeachment and eventual ouster drew to 2001.

Unleashed

Resurfacing as allegations that senior officials receive millions in jueteng payola every month, the PNP junta that installed Lomibao said these were unfounded.

"But it only cost before these reports came out, the police had already ordered mobilizations against all forms of illegal gambling," the PNP spokesperson, Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, said.

From Bataoil's lips to Bunye's ignored the report that three jueteng lords of a top-level network of operators who reap recipients of jueteng money.

"All we can say is that we can order jueteng illegal. This disease has been here for a long time and it will require the concerted effort of all sectors, especially our citizens, to help us isolate or totally stop it," Bunye said yesterday on dzRH radio.

Code names

The alleged code names of the three relatives of the top government official were MI, MI2 and MI3. MI is the eldest of the three; MI2 is a young politician in Luzon, and MI3 is his uncle, the informant source said.

Not only that, the source said, many local executives in Luzon provinces with huge jueteng operations were either directly or indirectly involved in financing or managers of the illegal numbers game.

The politicians all have the blessings of MI, he said.

Many are either political allies or members of a party identified with the top government officials.

When simply on the take, what is generous receives is the same as that of a police provincial director, the police official said.

Paradise

He said the trio—MI, MI2 and MI3—lobby so their boys would get regional and provincial posts in areas considered to be "paradise" by the police because of the huge jueteng payoffs.

But these "outsiders" do not control all police officials, the source admitted.

A top police official confirmed that policemen "up in the provincial level" were active the take in some of these regions. But regional police chiefs and the top brass in the PNP were not, he said.

He explained that posts in these regions were given to some of the best police officers as a burnout" reward.

"So you will notice, all the best officers are assigned to Central or Southern Luzon, and they usually deliver," he said.

Subsidy

In many instances, what the officials receive from jueteng subsidizes police stations and is used to finance operations, according to the official.

The PNP leadership seems a blind eye to the arrangement. "If it can be helped, the police say nothing about it. We're silent. But this does not mean the top officials encourage it, "he said.

"That's the way it goes. If a police chief receives money from jueteng, that's the risk he takes. Sorry for him if someone squeals on him in the province," he said.

Regional chiefs and top officials in Camp Crame already have "many other sources of money" and are careful not to dip their hands in jueteng, he said.

"In your (career) advancement, you become more careful. I don't think they (top police officials) touch it (jueteng money)," the official said.

But the business cannot be shunned otherwise.

Bagman

A unit in the PNP acts as the "bagman," collecting around P35 million a month for the big bosses.

"Sa everybody's happy, from the police chiefs in the provinces to the generals in Camp," he said.

"The lamest line here in police for quite sometime. Inubalan na ni Art (an 10-b been there before Art)," he said, referring to PNP chief Director General Arturo Lomibao.

Reacting to the news reports that jueteng operations were on the rise, Lomibao ordered renewed crackdown on jueteng.

Lomibao directed all the regional directors (RD) Region I to Region X, the Cordillera (Autonomous Region) and NCRPO (National Capital Region Police Office) to intensify the all-out campaign to stamp out jueteng in view of persistent reports of increasing jueteng operations," the police said in a text message sent to the bureau.

He warned those in an earlier memorandum dated March 30 that Angelo Reyes had directed the police to form a Task Force on Anti-Illegal Gambling and to be more aggressive in their anti-jueteng campaign.

The head of the criminal investigation and Detection Group, Chief Supt. Marnelo Baquir, now heads the task force.

Policemen have also been reminded of the three-strike policy that dismisses from the police force those three successive successful operations against jueteng in a province or region, the provincial or regional police chief will be sacked.

Lomibao has also reminded that the previous policies (on) command responsibility stands, and violators will be dealt with accordingly," Bataoil said.

President's home province

The government's campaign to stamp out jueteng is being hobbled by the undeterred operations of gambling lords in Pampanga, President Macapagal-Arroyo's home province. Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said yesterday.

"In fact, there's no lessen (operations) action from Baby (referring to mayor Baby Pineda) members game)," said Pimentel, who filed a resolution seeking an inquiry into the implementation of the year-old anti-jueteng law.

The Senate minority leader said that the authorities had failed miserably to enforce Republic Act No. 9287, which was signed into law in April last year and imposes higher penalties and fines on jueteng operators.

"If we go by the records, only the runners—the 'bet pol lot'—are being arrested up. Not after big men," he said. "And the information I'm getting into top officers is that a number of jueteng protectors are not only members of the police but also local officials."

HERE come the brides and groom of the Mangyan Tadudoh tribe at the municipal park of Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro.

77 Mangyan couples join . . .

From page A1

The couples, whose ages ranged from 11 to 66 years old, came from Barangay Salong. Most of them had long been married according to the Tadudoh traditions.

But for the civil ceremony some of the couples were western gowns and Barong Tagalog, which were either borrowed or rented because, as local officials later revealed, the Mangyan felt they were already civilized.

Lomibao was joined by all the regional directors (RD) Region I to Region X, the Cordillera (Autonomous Region) and NCRPO (National Capital Region Police Office) to intensify the all-out campaign to stamp out jueteng in view of persistent reports of increasing jueteng operations," the police said in a text message sent to the bureau.

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The wedding was one of the highlights of the couple's week-long celebration dubbed the "Binaghani Festival."

Relatives and neighbors of the couples mingled with bachelors who came to witness the wedding and join the fiesta.

Second mass wedding

Fine, a select group of the Tadudoh presented their traditions and rituals. This was followed by a civil ceremony solemnized by Mayor Antonio Baldon II.

This was the second mass civil wedding for the municipality. The first time was at the start of Baldon's term as mayor when 52 couples were married.

In his speech after the ceremony, Baldon said the local government has "no intention of eradicating the Mangyan culture and tradition but is working on preserving them instead."

He added that one of the initiatives of the local government was to help the Mangyan contest in harnessing technology.

He said he also wanted to give the Mangyan easy access to education. Beginning in mid-mid complex would enable their children to easily enroll in schools.

Wedding preparations

Preparations for the ceremony took at least a week. Three days were spent rehearsing the ceremony of the Tadudoh traditions and rituals. Another three days were devoted to rehearsing the wedding march.

Piet Baldos, the mayor's daughter, assigned a group to visit the Mangyan community in the mountains to dress and prepare their participants.

On the wedding day itself, the Mangyans, in traditional dress, headed the procession, followed by local officials and then the couples.

The newlyweds received gifts from their among and among (wedding sponsors).

Mrs. Tadudoh, also known as Barangay, is one of seven tribes in Mindoro that are collectively and more popularly known as Mangyan. The other groups are the Alangan, Bangon, Buhid, Iraya, Hanunoo and Tadyawan.

Representing the barangay during the event was Limgan Mandawang, although he was not the chieftain, said locals.

Protestant Mangyan

Mandawang, like most of the Mangyan that, was in full traditional gear. He wore a fiber (headdress) and one of the accessories. Around his waist was a piece of coconut fruit to catch a bugs (small flies) to drive away the (stick ignore).

He also had a (tatts (pipe), but later said he had given up smoking for health reasons.

Mandawang said their source of living came from hunting (duck-and-hen farming) and hunting. They also planted corn crops.

They carried a unit (basket) which they used as a container for food and hunting tools.

Mandawang, 58, has seven children and is a baptized Protestant. His family attends Bible school.

He said American missionaries taught them about salvation and the promise of eternal life.

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Malacañang blows hot . . .

From page A1

be nearing in its support for labor's demand for a wage increase, especially since the country's biggest employers' group waived opposition to any labor's adjustments or in before Labor Day.

"Let us not tie ourselves to a specific deadline. It's difficult to raise the expectations of our workers that something will happen in the regional wage boards on or before May 1," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in an interview over dzRM radio yesterday.

Strike threat

"All we know is that the person on the side or the wage increase petition) is already moving, so let's just wait. It's hard to give a deadline," Bunye said.

Less than four days ago, Malacañang was all for a minimum wage increase. Worried about a threat by labor groups to launch a nationwide strike on Labor Day, it ordered the regional wage boards to expedite the review of labor's long pending petition for a P125 increase in the daily minimum wage and come up with a decision on or before May 1.

Bunye even said that it was almost time the minimum wage was raised as the working class could cope with the steep rise in the prices of goods and services.

Employers should adopt "a spirit of give-and-take," he added.

Yesterday, Malacañang was singing a different tune, especially after the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (which is represented in the regional wage boards) strongly objected in a proposal to increase wages at this time.

Changing circumstances

Bunye claimed that its members could not absorb the added costs as proposed by Malacañang. Instead of raising wages, the group suggested that the government reduce the amount of taxes withheld from workers to give them a bigger take-home pay.

Instead of focusing on when the minimum wage increase would be approved, Bunye stressed that "what is more important is that a lot of workers realize that the circumstances have changed."

He added: "If we then will be a reasonable hike in our workers' wages, this will be balanced with the interest of business. We believe we can come up with a satisfactory middle arrangement."

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ADBOARD
AGAP

Ciara never complained of illness that killed her

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

BEFORE she became ill, Ciara Marie, 10, daughter of Mandaluyong Rep. Benhur Abalos, had been going around the metropolis, seldom staying home, busy working on a project for her school organization.

Her family remains clueless on what could have caused the leukemia that led to her death Friday night.

"A few days before she had fever, she went to a lot of places like in Greenhills," her aunt Charisse Marie said when asked what could have caused Ciara's illness.

It. Cold bacteria may be found in food, brush wastes or soil contaminated by human waste, experts say.

This type of fatal coliform bacteria can cause diarrhea, hepatitis and cholera when ingested.

Ciara was at the Hilmy Imposs International Airport at about 8 p.m. Wednesday to accompany her grandfather, Commission on Elections chief Benjamin Abalos, and his wife to the United States.

She had been feeling ill since the day before but thought it was only due to her monthly period, Charisse told the Inquirer.

Ciara already had her boarding pass and already paid her terminal fee when her grandfather noticed her shaking after coming from the toilet.

They canceled her trip and a family friend volunteered to drive Ciara home.

But she promised that she would just follow her grandparents on Friday.

Before leaving, she flashed "the sweetest smile," Abalos said. She hugged him and kissed him on the cheek.

Before Ciara got home, she just stayed in her room.

"Maybe she was already in pain. She just did not let us know," Charisse said.

On Thursday night, "after three days of fever, body malaise, diarrhea and vomiting," she was brought to the Cardinal Santos Medical Center, a family statement said.

She never got to fulfill her promise to join her grandfather in the US.

She died of multiple organ failure at about 10 p.m., Friday, almost the same time of her admitted flight to the States, Abalos said.

"God has his ways. Maybe He wants her to be as an angel so she would no longer suffer," he added.

In its statement, the family said Ciara "developed tachycardia, Cold intolerance which caused the diarrhea and the high grade fever."

This "eventually became full-blown bacterial sepsis destroying all the blood components leading to disseminated intravascular coagulation and multi-organ system failure," the statement added.

Her remains lie at the house of her grandparents on Kanlaon Street in Mandaluyong City. It was the house where she grew up.

The street was closed to traffic yesterday morning.

Abalos described his grandaughter as a "very simple" girl despite growing up in a wealthy family.

He said his wife Cora, while on their way to the airport on Wednesday, even asked Ciara why she packed old clothes in crushed Inquirer bags.

She replied it was fun because, anyway she would be putting on jackets, Abalos added.

The grandmother, who opposed revelation his emergency trip back to the country amidst during the wake, pointing out that Ciara got her smile from him.

"She always smiled. She never had a serious face," Abalos said.

Ciara, an incoming senior at De La Salle University, had also told her grandfather that she wanted to put up a preparatory school.

"Many love Ciara. She was very active in community service," her twin Charisse, younger by about seven minutes, said.

Ciara even taught catechism in an urban poor community in Mandaluyong City.

After each session, she would feed the kids, Abalos added.

Ciara would have turned 20 on June 29.

Her uncle, city Councilor Jun Abalos said her funeral area arrangements set for Wednesday.

Based on initial plans, she would be buried in the Alphaland Cemetery in Mandaluyong beside her younger brother Bryan, who died inside their mother's womb.

But Charisse said their father Benhur wanted to bury Ciara in a private place but still in Mandaluyong.

Green and white balloons, Ciara's favorite colors, will accompany her funeral, Charisse said.

"If it's my time to go, then it's my time to go," Ciara used to tell Charisse.

Son of former police general in traffic spat

A SON of former police Director Eduardo Matibatibi was reported to have engaged a policeman in a road confrontation following a collision accident along Mendiola Avenue in Sharp City last week.

Police records show that Bryan Khadhaan, 32, and 10321 Gennaro Bianozzi, 43, traded accusations after the Toyota Revo of Bianozzi was sideswiped by the Mercedes Benz driven by a friend of Bryan last April 18.

Bianozzi said that he was talking to the Boiz owners, Bonjar Panaligan, when Bryan arrived. Bryan then allegedly hit Bianozzi in the face. The former police official's son then allegedly flashed a gun tucked in his waist.

But in his counter-complaint, the son of the former chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group said it was Bianozzi who bullied his friend and flashed a gun. Edson C. Tandoc

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Locked gate fails to block festivity

BEFORE a locked front gate and a stern warning from the city government, intrepid revelers still managed to celebrate Earth Day inside the disputed Arroceros Forest Park in Manila yesterday.

"It is illegal for anybody to stop the celebrations of Earth Day," Odette Sharma of Mother Earth Philippines said, who joined fraternities and a host of the park.

Margaux C. Ortiz

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NOTICE OF 20-HOUR WATER SERVICE INTERRUPTION IN VALENZUELA, MEYCAUAYAN AND OBANDO WATER DISTRICTS, AND PORTIONS OF MALABON CITY

Maynilad Water Services Inc. has scheduled a 20-hour water service interruption in the entire Valenzuela City, the Meycauayan and Obando Water Districts and portions of Malabon City from 9 p.m., Thursday, April 28 to 5 p.m., Friday, April 29, 2005.

The water service interruption is due to the interconnection of a 600mm S.P. Manifold to the existing 1200mm S.P. Manifold along Gen. Luis corner Mariano St., Caloocan City; replacement of the 1200mm Butterfly valve's actuator along Gen. Luis corner 720 Compound Road (Fronting Vista Verde North), Caloocan City; and replacement of the 600mm Butterfly valve's actuator along Mayaan St. fronting Petron Gasoline Station, Valenzuela City.

The project is meant to improve the water supply in the area.

The areas that will have no water during the service interruption are the whole of Valenzuela City, Meycauayan Water District and Obando Water District, including Fatima General Hospital, Polo General Hospital and San Miguel Corporation. Areas in Malabon City that will have no water are barangays Maysilo, Panghulo and Santol.

In view of the water service interruption, affected customers are advised to store water good for 20 hours. They may check with Maynilad Hotline 1626, the nearest branch office, or their barangay chairman for the schedule of water rationing in their respective areas.

Maraming salamat po sa inyong pang-unawa.

MAYNILAD WATER SERVICES, INC.
1626

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MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2005

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Drive vs no plates revived

By Margaux C. Ortiz

IT HAS been an on-off campaign and now it's on again.

Beginning today, motorists caught driving vehicles without authorized license plates would be apprehended.

Metropolitan Capital Regional Traffic Office (MCRTO) chief Eugenio Lawrence Cesario Andaya Kamon Jr. has ordered the full implementation of the "No Plate, No Travel" policy in Metro Manila.

Kamon issued the directive after Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes and members of the Metro Manila Mayors' Council signed an agreement to prohibit motorists from using temporary/fake plates.

The MCRTO directive stressed that motorists caught using fake or unauthorized temporary/fake plates would be arrested.

However, Kamon said the use of authorized temporary/fake plates would still be allowed "as long as the driver also displays the original license plates issued by the Land Transportation Office (LTO)."

"Pending the installation on the use of the commemorative plates, the latest issued temporary/fake plates may still be used provided they do not cover the regular LTO car plates," Kamon said in a statement.

He said the order would help authorities in controlling the number of car theft cases and other criminal acts in the metropolis.

Kamon added that car theft and kidnapping syndicates often use fake or expired temporary/fake plates to confuse pursuing barangay.

"The no plates, no travel policy is a standing rule that was first implemented last year in order to curb the rise of car thefts and kidnapping.

Last year, it was agreed upon by government and car sellers that new vehicles sold should already have their license plates.

Vehicles without authorized plates were impounded and their owners fined ₱5,000.

Atienza bans MMDA 'goons' from Manila

DESCRIBING members of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority as "heavy-handed goons," Manila Mayor Lito Atienza has prohibited them from conducting clearing operations in his city.

Atienza ordered the ban after a shooting incident involving an MMDA clearing contractor in Cubao last week. The driver fired killed policeman driver and wounded another.

"We tolerate of good intentions will justify the use of force," Atienza said in a statement.

"The problem with these MMDA people is that they are over-zealous in the performance of their duties," the mayor said.

The mayor said that only MMDA traffic operations would be allowed to help the city.

MMDA officials have denied instigating the shooting by pointing out that their men were not armed.

Margaux C. Ortiz

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B1
BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo
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TOSHIBA

SEC urged to probe Pacific Plans books

By Michelle V. Rama

FINANCE Secretary Cesar Purisima has called on the Securities and Exchange to investigate how the finances of procured firm Pacific Plans Inc. were handled to determine what forced the company to request for a suspension of payments to plan holders.

The SEC should look beyond the rehabilitation plan and scrutinize the books of Pacific Plans so that parties can be held to its financial responsibilities to the plan holders," Purisima said in a statement.

The finance chief suggested that the SEC check whether the company did not violate any provision of the Securities Act and other related laws, and find out the usefulness of its officials and parent firm, the Yuchengco group.

He also recommended that the SEC investigate state company transactions and representations.

The suggestion to initiate a thorough investigation of the Pacific Plan case followed concerns over the ability of plan holders' money to the financial problem of another pre-need firm, Efficom Insurance Plan remains unresolved.

While Purisima was urging the SEC to investigate the case of Pacific Plans, he earlier supported the suggestion that the regulation of pre-need companies be transferred from the SEC to the Insurance Commission, an attached agency of the DOF.

The transfer of the regulation of the pre-need industry to the Insurance Commission has been proposed by many sectors, believing that pre-need and insurance were similar in nature.

Pacific Plans earlier filed for a suspension of payments and rehabilitation with a Makati City court, stating it may not be able to continue making claims in the future.

Pacific Plan officials blamed the filing of the 10-percent cap on interest investment in 1999 for its financial problems.

But the pre-need firm, which has 34,000 plan holders, said it could still restore claims for the coming school term.

The company said in its rehabilitation petition that it had P946 million in cash for the coming enrollment period. It said that while its ability to pay future claims was doubtful, it could ensure the money paid by the plan holders plus cost return of 7 percent a year from the date the plan was fully paid.

FLEEING

P5.2-B expansion of SMC unit gets incentives

By Clarissa S. Batino

SAN Miguel Brewery Inter-Con... a joint venture of the local food and beverage giant and a Japanese glass manufacturer, is undertaking a P5.2 billion expansion of its plant in Iriga, Cebu.

The Board of Investments approved last month the company's application for tax incentives covering the upgrades of the facility.

The new plant expansion will be completed in 2007. The upgrade will allow the company to hire 157 more workers and produce more bottles.

San Miguel Corp. owns 60 percent of the venture while the remaining 40 percent is controlled by Japanese firm Nihon Yamamura Glass Co. Ltd.

The local container producer mainly bottles packaging of consumer products, including those manufactured by the local food and beverage conglomerate. San Miguel and Nihon Yamamura have three other partnerships

P5.1 & 61

Currencies

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Market Affer

P 54.17 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., April 22, 2005

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As of 5 p.m., April 22, 2005

GOLD: $412.30-413.80

per ounce Hong Kong April 22, 2005

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(See stock market report on Page B2)

Listless trading seen

LISTLESS trading is expected this week as market players await this passage of... and the hope that will be taken by the value-added tax bills Congress.

The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange composite index last week rose 4.07 points to 1,888.72 on negative footing until Wall Street's late rally.

Eagle Equities Inc. president Joey Perez said the modest weight session will begin this week in the passage of the VAT bill.

The VAT measure remains deadlocked in the bicameral conference committee, which is trying to reconcile the versions of the Senate and the House. The House version instructs the lowering the VAT rate to 10 percent from 12 percent as well as the filing of exemptions enjoyed by various sectors.

BPI Trade said in its weekly report that the Senate will mark positive news and the uncertainty on the final version of the VAT bill was pending with the bicameral committee pulled the P/E to some year's low.

An analyst from a local brokerage firm also said that the outlook on future stock movements was created on the same uncertainty about monetary policy in the United States.

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Gov't seeks ways to boost geothermal investments

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy is proposing that the country's geothermal resources be classified as mineral resources in order to provide foreign entities an interest in the geothermal sector.

"This would allow the utilization of geothermal resources to be made on the same basis as the rest of the mining industry. We have precedence for this in other areas of the world and would not be in violation of the Constitution," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said.

"In the Philippines, (the world) allow the exist of much needed capital for the full utilization of this country's geothermal resources on the same terms that the Supreme Court has accepted for the mining sector," he added.

Under the manner are any flaws existing to invest in the development of the country's geothermal resources here to be at least 60 percent Filipino-owned.

If geothermal resources would be considered mineral resources, then 100 percent foreign firms would invest in the sector.

The Supreme Court last last year reversed a landmark decision it made in January 2004 that declared RA 7942, or the Philippine Mining Act, unconstitutional.

The Mining Act had allowed foreign firms to invest in mining projects in the country, but the constitutionality of this provision was challenged in court.

The reversal of the Supreme Court's decision spurred the local mining industry, even boosting the share prices of many companies listing shares on the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Among the country's geothermal resources covered by laws similar to the Mining Act would likely result in a surge in investments in the sector, Lotilla said.

The Philippines is currently the world's second biggest producer of geothermal energy with an installed capacity of 2,194 megawatts (MW) in 2005, according to the DOE's updated Philippine Energy Plan (PEP) for 2005-2014.

For the country to achieve its goal of displacing the United States as the biggest geothermal energy producer in the world, the PEP said the sector would need P158.8 billion in new investments.

For Luzon exploration and development, P97.4 billion in investments will be required, for the Visayas, the amount needed is P37.1 billion, while in Mindanao, the estimate required is P19.9 billion.

These new investments would boost the optimization or expansion of existing geothermal plants and fields as well as the exploration and development of new areas.

Lotilla's geothermal-as-mineral revenue proposal would be included in the draft Renewable Energy bill that he had ordered reviewed in 30 days. The review would evaluate the constitutionality and the economic necessity of defining geothermal resources as mineral resources.

When elephants make love

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

YOUTH found the saying, "When elephants fight, the ants get trampled." It continues, "And when elephants make love, the ants get trampled as well." Lately, these sayings have become relevant for us small economies in Southeast Asia as we witness several developments involving China, Japan and India, the acknowledged "elephants" among the economies in this part of the world.

Mating elephants

For all our claims to being among the most globalized people in the world, Filipinos still seem to be too starved-looking to notice or give due importance to a recent event that is bound to reshape the world economy. This gem's lead editorial about a week ago (PDI, 4/17/07) dealt on the subject, i.e., the landmark April 11 accord signed in New Delhi during Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's official visit to the Indian capital. The pact calls for enhanced diplomatic and economic ties, marks on a "strategic partnership for peace and prosperity" and provides that "neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other by any means." Both committed to move toward establishing a free trade area (FTA) between them. With a combined population of 2.3 billion, it would be the biggest free trade bloc in the world. Initially, the target is to boost bilateral trade to $200 billion by 2008, from $13.6 last year. Specific elements include major liberalization of tariff lines, harmonization of regimes of origin and mutual recognition of standards, and increased cooperation in the conformity assessment sector including farmers, documentary and examination fees.

Should we now worry that these elephants are "looking here"?

Trade creation, diversion

Any trade accord that brings down import barriers among the signing countries leads to two basic effects. One is trade creation, wherein lower tariffs lead each member country to source more of certain products from cheaper producers in the free trade partners, rather than rely on more costly domestic producers. The other effect is trade diversion, where the member countries turn away from cheaper (and more efficient) producers in non-member countries to higher cost producers from the free trade partners. Freed from import tariffs, the latter can become cheaper, more attractive sources even if its production costs are higher than in a non-member country where products remain subject to tariffs that make them artificially more expensive. The higher the prevailing tariffs on non-member countries, the more trade diversion is likely to occur.

The relevant question for us and our neighbors is, do their products we are currently selling to either China and/or India run the risk of being hit or at least hurt by the free trade pacts? Even

JAZA takes BPI cut

BANK of the Philippine Islands has found a way to rein in excessive compensation and keep the package within competitive levels—the bank dropped its chair from the executive rolls.

Starting this year, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II, the chair of the insurance-oriented unlisted Philguar Bank, is no longer part of the top five salaried executives, unlike the previous years, according to its recently released 2004 annual report.

This, plus the retirement of long time president Antoni Laforet, will cause the investment 2005 salaries and bonuses of the Top Five list by new president CEO Aurelio Montinola III to plunge to P72 million, from P127.4 million in 2004 and 198.6 million in 2003.

"BPI's net income grew by an average of 8.3 percent over the last three years due to higher revenues and well-managed overhead," the bank said in its report to stockholders.

The total compensation for the BPI's 11-member board, meanwhile, dropped to P27 million in 2004 from P27 million in 2003, the last year with Jaime Zobel de Ayala, MAP's father, as chair. Total board compensation was P28 million the year before.

It was not immediately clear why the Zobel heir had been excluded from the executive compensation list. Laforet, who retired end-2004 but remains in the BPI board, was surprised and could offer no explanation when informed of the change.

BPI last year granted Ayala Corp., the Zobel holding company, a 92.95-million loan, but it is not clear whether the grant had any correlation to the compensation scrutiny trend.

Cosmos losing flair

JOSE Concepcion III took some heat from his relatives when he sold the publicly listed Cosmos Bottling to the San Miguel Group in January 2002.

Three years later, Joey could be having the last laugh.

Were the San Miguel-Coca Cola bars took over, Cosmos sales have been flat after posting a First year spike, thanks to a November 2001 price increase implemented by Concepcion, while profitability has been mixed to going down.

Net profit last year dubbed to P204.27 million, from P656 million in 2003, but over half of 2003's profit—P480 million, was due to a one-time accounting gain by way of share transfer from the company's land-holding company.

In contrast, in 2001, the last full year of the Concepcion rule, the country's Five soft drinks manufacturing company posted P472.6 million in net profit.

To keep administrative and operating costs down, the new Cosmos bosses shut down six of the 12 bottling plants and interrupted an early retirement program. And, in the hope of boosting sales, the company appointed in February a new national sales and marketing director, Benito E. Santos, formerly of Tabacalera.

Among Santos' urgent tasks...keep the mounting double-digit inventory down; resist a determined sales push but resist decline in receivables more than doubled to P284 million, from P96 million in 2003.

Money-go-round

★ CHINABANK executives, led by chair Edbert Lim and president/CEO Peter Dee, are being rewarded this year with an 8-percent salary increase, after posting a 14.37-percent return on equity to their shareholders last year.

★ RUBBERMEX PHIL president Lorenzo Tan has accepted an offer from EuroLife Philippines to become its president/CEO, beginning June.

Heard through the grapevine

TOD DARDEN-ALLEN just seemed has been placed under receivership, amid charges by the Filipino partner Alfredo Lagman Jr. that the Japanese management sabotaged the San Jose-old venture and the local flotation as conditioned while allowing the parallel importation of Daihen units through its former dealer, Hanil Industries of Subic Fa.

From P527 million profit in 1997, Abs started posting annual losses in the second year after folding in the company with the Japanese-led joint venture.

Former SEC commissioner Danilo Concepcion has been appointed receiver.

(Email: zobeldes_pd@philstar.net or zobeldes_pd@yahoo.com)

COCKTALES

Victor C. Aganon

Globe Telecom, PLDT extend fixed-line unlimited promo

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. and Globe Telecom Inc. have extended call-all-you-can, within network inter-prone nationwide for their fixed-line subscribers by another month.

Globelines 30-day "Wild Ito Na Magbalbalyad," which was supposed to end on April 18 was extended to May 20 following strong feedback from its subscribers.

PLDT's 150-per call "Talkbalyad" promo was again extended to May 31. It was launched last Feb. 14.

PLDT's wireless arm, Smart Communications Inc. and Philippine Telephone Corp. scanned last Friday their unlimited 25c/8-min/h for prepaid subscribers.

The P30 call rate applies to all PLDT calls anywhere in the country as well as to all Smart, Sun and Talk N' Text mobile subscribers regardless of the length of the call. PLDT has more than 2.2 million fixed-line and wireless customers all over the country.

Smart and Talk N' Text are equally offering fixed-line pricing of P1.0 for unlimited calls for seven days and P60 for unlimited text for four days.

In a bid to avoid congesting their network that currently accommodates more than 1.9 million subscribers daily, Smart and Talk N' Text are imposing a cap on the length of the unlimited calls to no more than three minutes during peak hours and a maximum of 1.6 minutes each call during off-peak hours of 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Pan Cellular's 24/7 is now offering a two-day unlimited call and text deal for P28.

Sky Globe, the deal is that new customers who would sign up for Globe/Sun until May 29 would enjoy free calls to any fixed-line Globe subscriber anywhere in the country for the duration of the subscription.

Some 300,000 Globelines postpaid subscribers already enjoy the benefits of "WIG Ito na Magbalbalyad."

Subscribers just need to call the customer care hotline numbers for Globe, Touch or Mindanao to avail themselves of the promo. They can also drop by the nearest Globelines Payment and Service Business Center.

"What our subscribers truly appreciate about this promo is that it is very simple and easy to use and avail of, in addition to their having experienced the many benefits of free PDB calls," said Globelines marketing head Jose Antonio Oreja Jr.

Globe's postpaid landline monthly subscription rates between P650 and P990 for residential customers and between P880 and P1,200 for business. Rates in provinces are cheaper than in the metropolis.

In Metro Manila, the monthly rate for Globe landline is P650.

"Globelines delivers real benefits to its subscribers. Strengthening the landline's bond and optimizing a business' operations through reliable communications and quality service at affordable rates are the major benefits we give to our customers," Oreja added.

PLDT had marketed plans to make its FIG "Telebalyad" rate as a permanent pricing strategy to encourage more people to use the landline.

"They like the promo's simplicity and affordable price," said PLDT head of retail Butch Jimenez.

Jimenez said calls to PLDT's customer service hotline, 171, have increased from 5,000 a day to more than 35,000. Most inquiries were related to the P30 per-call deal.

The PLDT retail head said there had been a strong uptake in applications for PLDT landlines as well.

Jimenez added that commercial clients accessed by other carriers have passed local exchanges encouraging PLDT to enter their exchanges to subscribers from competing landline players nationwide are likewise exposing for connection to PLDT to avail themselves of the P30 per-call offer.

He said three weeks after the promo started on Feb. 14, the number of calls using PLDT lines jumped to an average of 1,500,000 a day from about 350,000 before the P30 call rate.

The number of callers also grew by 40 percent to an average of 140,000 a day.

N. Ecija bank gets BSP emergency line

By Doris C. Dumlao and Elizabeth Sanchez

THE MONEY board of Filipinas Bank gave Nueva Ecija-based Merchants Rural Bank of Talavera Inc., an affiliate of the defunct Rural Bank of San Miguel, a P530-million emergency credit line to cope with its cash flow problems.

But banking sources said the BSP had released only about P20 million to Merchants Bank so far, representing the amount covered by collateral committed to the banking regulator.

"They have a P500-million credit line but the amount they can actually get will depend on how much assets can be given as collateral," one banking source said.

Another banking source said Merchants Bank was seeking to obtain more loans from the BSP to maximize the credit line.

The rural bank, in a previous meeting with the BSP, also pledged that a new investor was buying in to help resolve its liquidity problems.

Merchants' bank operates eight branches. It was recently hit by a spate of heavy withdrawals.

Based on Merchants Bank's amended articles of incorporation filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1981, the bank's owners were Dominador Bery, Teguera Medina-Bery, Arsenio Valencia, Teodosio Bautista and David Pangilinan.

In a separate stock disclosure released by the bourse, however, the

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N. Ecija bank gets . . .

From page A1

owner of the defunct ORIENTBanco Insiana were claimed to be the principal owner of Merchants Bank.

It's a puzzling signal by legal counsels Jeffrey Ordoñez and Lamberto Gonzales dated Sept. 27, 2003, removing a hold departure order filed against Insiana, the investments in Merchants Bank and another holding company, Insiana Holdings Corp., were cited as among the compelling reasons for his presence in the country.

As of that time, the same court documents claimed Merchants Bank had total assets of P400-million.

But despite its current financial woes, Merchants Bank was not planning to declare any bank holiday nor suspend operations. The president of Merchants Bank also assured the 850 that there were no anomalies in the bank's operation and that it was simply hit by a cash flow mismatch due to heavy withdrawals.

Affiliate bank BANK, once the biggest bank in Bulacan, went on a bank holiday in January 2000 and was eventually shut down by the BSP.

Meanwhile, the BSP clarified that another bank using the trade name "Merchants Bank", Merchants Savings and Loan Association Inc. (MSLAI), was not related to the Merchants Bank that was having cash flow problems.

The BSP in an official statement yesterday said that although both Merchants Bank and MSLAI were both using the same name in their signages, these were different entities and completely unrelated to each other.

"MSLAI or Merchants Bank, the thrift bank which has 21 branches nationwide, is fully capitalized at P487 million and has not been experiencing liquidity problems," the BSP said.

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Banana traders want slice of $70-M Aussie market

By Christine A. Gaylican

BATAAN exporters and importers will extend technical and financial support to the government in order to export fresh bananas to Australia and corner its lucrative $70-million market.

The Philippine Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) has given their assurance to support the Department of Agriculture (DA) in its effort to persuade Australians to accept the Philippine product.

The growers in Australia have vowed to block Philippine banana exports.

Francisco Letargo, senior vice president of PBGEA, member-company Lapanday Foods Corp. and general manager for plantation and agricultural operations segments, on Friday said that they would likely provide the technical and technical assistance that would support the country's highland farmers.

According to the highlands bureau, DA undersecretary for policy and planning, the agency will file a new petition letter with the World Trade Organization to pressure Australia to open up its market and provide an indefinite timeframe in reviewing the export of Philippine bananas.

"We will invest our sights at the WTO because it seems the Australians are not taking to seriously," Serrano told reporters.

The Australian Parliament still has not issued a final decision on the Philippine banana export application. Philippine officials fear that the Australian authorities will add to its tax on their banana imports.

"Competitive pricing appears to be the main factor in the lobby against Filipino bananas since Philippine imports are pegged at $200 per 18-kilo box as against Australian bananas that are at roughly $22 a box," Lorenzo said.

Serrano said banana rates an important agricultural product export. The Philippine banana industry is currently supporting rebuilding and rehabilitation of farmers in Mindanao.

"Banana production and trade is a parallel track in pursuing peace and development in Mindanao," Serrano added.

The Philippines is now the second largest banana producer in the world. Farms in Mindanao can efficiently produce favorable bananas, averaging 30,000 tons of bananas per hectare a year, said Sonny Bayani, chairman and CEO of La Frutera Inc., the exclusive grower-exporter.

Shipment of fresh bananas, particularly the Philippine cavendish variety, to different countries moved up by 3.4 percent to 1.76 million metric tons in 2004, generating about $1 billion, according to data obtained from the PBGEA and the Department of Trade and Industry.

The growth could be attributed to higher demand in Japan, the Middle East and Hong Kong.

Demand from other markets such as South Korea and China declined by 9 and 11 percent, respectively, compared to the volume that had been shipped in 2003.

Gov't cuts payment lag to one month

By Michelle V. Basco

THE DEPARTMENT of Budget and Management has already satisfied the bulk of its liabilities to government suppliers and contractors after the government last year posted a lower than expected deficit.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said it has reduced its payment lag to only one month from the previous four months. This means that when the DBM only has to pay out liabilities that the government incurred a month ago.

"I think one month is already the best we can do," she told reporters. "Since many private companies do not pay creditors if goods or services[illegible] within two month."

She said the improvement in the government's payment was made possible after it posted a budget deficit last year of only P187 billion, or about P11 billion lower than the official deficit target of P197.8 billion.

The P11 billion was the amount spared to netting the bulk of the government's liabilities.

Meanwhile, expenditures were similarly reported to have reached P2265.1 billion in the first quarter. The reported net figure led to a deficit of P63.5 billion in the period, as revenues only stood at P174.4 billion.

Boncodin said the relatively high expenditure in the first quarter was partly brought about by the resumption of P7.1 billion in debts of state-owned National Power Corp.

The government decided to assume P200 billion of Napocor debts, although this will be done in a staggered basis over the next nine years.

For 2005, the government is targeting a deficit worth P175 billion which is equal to about P7 billion lower than last year's.

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ALL-IN VALUE SEMINARS

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PPI in talks with foreign firm

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE PHILIPPINE Rim Pacific Financial Inc. (PPI) of the Pachuijao family is in talks with a foreign financial institution to set up funds that may be used to purchase the unserviced fixed-value plans of PPI plan holders under the pre-need fund recovery fund program.

Early this month, a Makati regional trial court allowed PPI to suspend payments and undergo rehabilitation. The firm told the Makati court that it had run out of cash and might not be able to pay future claims.

PPI has announced that it can only pay P344 million for the present enrollment period.

In its petition for rehabilitation, PPI's obligation to awarding plan holders is pegged at P9.82 billion for the May to June 2002 enrollment period.

PPI has 34,000 plan holders, 16,000 of whom have filed for educational claims for the school-year 2001-2002.

PPI is now offering to return its plan holders' payments by issuing fixed-value plans.

"The liquidity fund we are trying to put up is another option for our plan holders for ready cash," the company said in a statement.

"The plan holders don't have to look around for a buyer because it will be a ready buyer."

PPI also said it wants to address the needs of some of its plan holders to convert to cash their fixed-value plans which will mature in July 2030.

For those who can wait until 2030, the company said the plans will earn upon maturity 7 percent in compounded interest, excluding charges.

These plans are backed up by government bonds which are among the safest investments in treasuries around, PPI said.

The fixed-value plans will be issued after the Makati court approves the planned rehabilitation of PPI.

According to the company, it wants to be fair to all its plan holders by shelving its remaining P341 million. It has imposed a ceiling for retrieval support at P12,000 per semester for those enrolled in non-sectarian schools, and P20,000 for those in sectarian schools.

PPI is hoping recovered investors will inflow P300 million in to PPI as part of working capital.

"We will talk with anybody who are serious in getting into the company," PPI spokesperson Jeanette Tecson said.

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BMC MAKES SINGLE BIGGEST TAX PAYMENT
Bureau of Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo L. Parayno, Jr. (middle) receives from SM Investments Corp. (SMIC) vice chair Teresita T. Sy (6th from left) a P1.15-billion check as tax payment for SMIC's initial public offering held last month. Parayno has described the payment as the single biggest payment the agency has received.

Kirin Brewery gets 3rd seat in SMC board

SAN MIGUEL Corp. (SMC) management will turn over a third board seat to Japan's Kirin Brewery Co. Ltd., firming up the Japanese investor's stake in the food and beverage giant's 15-man board.

In a press statement, Kirin executive Kazuhiro Sato, a corporate to replace Manuel Cojuangco, brother of SMC chair Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. in the SMC board.

The announcement will be made during the stockholder's meeting next month.

Kirin has two seats in SMC, represented by Hiroshi Ochiya and Yoshinori Isozaki.

The SMC management will be represented in three board seats, with Cojuangco as chair, Ramon Ang as SMC president, and Ricardo Mendoza as legal counsel.

SMC management said to hold four seats.

Industry sources said Kirin's added seat in the board would have no effect on SMC's balance of power since the Yuchengco Group is said to be allied with Cojuangco.

Ruchirawat Bligo Dalisi and SM Investments Corp.'s Henry Sy Jr. are expected to remain as independent directors.

The government will also keep its seven seats through the Presidential Commission on Good Government. The Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System.

The PCGG assumes for five seats, each has one seat.

Kirin, one of Japan's largest beverages, bought P5.14 billion in additional shares in SMC early this month, increasing its stake to 20 percent from 18.67 percent.

SMC recently raised P17.6 billion from a recent stock rights offering.

Its majority owned brand unit, ran newly to hold roughly a 65.6 percent stake in SMC.

Also last January Kirin increased its stake to 20.67 percent, reflecting the Japanese brewer's firm vote of confidence in the best group's long-term prospects. Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Listless trading . . .

"In the US, investors are worried about economic data that are coming out because they are in a bear zone for the direction that the federal Reserve will be taking for the rate hike, aggregate demand indicators such as consumption seems to point to a slowing down, but inflation figures are pointing to an acceleration in prices. So uncertainty is the outlook and difficult to read, and this is spilling over to the region," the analyst said.

Moreover, BPI Phils said that with the market reaching lower levels bargain hunters were

GMA unit sees 20% growth in '05

By Clarissa S. Batino

GMA NEW Media Inc., a unit of GMA Network Inc., is projecting a 20 percent growth in its finances this year from the 2004 profit level of P25 million.

In 2004, the GMA unit earned P120 million in revenue, its top official said.

GMA New Media is the subsidiary in charge of interactive and multi-media entertainment as well as research and development of new products for new technologies.

New Media has tie-ups with telco companies to encourage viewers and phone subscribers to text GMA stars, join television contests, participate in mobile gaming, download tones and images, and others.

Of the fee ranging from P2.50 to P15 each, depending on the product, the telcos get 70 percent and the network ends up with 30 percent.

New Media generates about 600,000 to a million hits a day, according to Judd Gallares, the company president.

Among the GMA subsidiaries, New Media is the biggest contributor to the network last year, Gallares said.

GMA Network registered profits of P1.5 billion in 2004 from about a billion pesos in 2003. Now the country's most profitable broadcast company GMA derives most of its earnings from advertising on its highly-rated shows.

Gallares said that New Media's performance in the first quarter was affected by the telco price war.

"I think our revenues dropped by about 20 to 25 percent during the first quarter due to the price war," he said. "As a result, subscribers opted to focus on text messaging because of the unlimited price and less on value-added services."

Still, the company would grow by at least 20 percent this year as the company gets more external clients like Cartoon Network, Solar Interactive, Regal Films and others, the New Media president said.

At present, New Media is studying the feasibility of going into new technologies like Mobile TV and Virual radio, Gallares said.

Visual radio and Mobile TV are two new multimedia trends that phone manufacturers like Nokia would like to launch over the next two years.

LTO: 3-year registration for brand new cars

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

LAST Jan. 3, the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) issued Administrative Order No. 010-2005, signed by Assistant Secretary Annell Lenlik and approved by three department secretaries—Leandro Mendoza of the DOTC, Emilia Boncodin of Budget and Management, and Juanita Amatong of Finance.

With such an array of government dignitaries, the AO takes on the aura of a presidential decree.

When you cut through the bureaucratic verbiage, the core of the AO says that the initial registration of all brand-new vehicles shall be valid for three years.

Then follows more red tape: Such initial registration shall require the Certificate of Conformity (COC) issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Compulsory Third Party Liability insurance policy valid for three years.

For the car owner, the immediate benefit from this plan is obvious. After registering his new car, he does not go back to the Land Transportation Office (LTO) until three years later.

For the LTO, two-thirds of the administrative work is cut down. Also, the plan speeds up LTO's cash flow, and helps wipe out the national deficit.

But the plan raises some questions. I read the AO to mean that the registration fee will be three times the annual fee. If my reading is correct, then, for the sake of administrative efficiency the registration fee, instead of being reduced, has been increased. By the way, the LTO uses this same ploy with your driver's license. Your three-year license costs you three times the annual fee.

When the three-year fee is computed at three times the annual rate, the fees for the second and third years take on the nature of advances. Which brings up this question: Does the car owner get a refund of his second and third year fees if his car is totally wrecked in the first year?

If he does not (ever heard of a government agency granting a refund?), then the three-year fee should be computed at a discount. It would be fair to compute the three-year registration fee at two and a half times the annual rate. This is usually what is done in the insurance industry for three-year policies.

Then there is the matter of the Compulsory Third Party Liability insurance. This is a regulated line of insurance. The Insurance Commission has to grant prior approval of the wordings and premiums of the policy, not to mention the agent's commission. Otherwise, since the policy is a statutory requirement for registration, the premium will soar to high heavens.

The wordings, premiums and commissions now in force are for a one-year policy. The insurance industry can easily design a three-year policy. But this new product has to go through a process at the insurance companies association and the Insurance Commission. Finally, new forms will have to be printed and distributed to all policy-issuing outlets.

But I hear the AO was issued without prior notice to the Insurance Commission and to the insurance companies. So, there is now a scramble at the insurance association to come out with a three-year policy.

Sometimes, I think the DOTC treats the Insurance Commission as if it were a minor section of the LTO. For the sake of the insuring public, it is time the commission stands up for its rights.

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By Clarissa S. Recina

PHILIPPINE Steel Corp., a unit of Japanese firm Kawasaki Steel Corp., is investing P520 million to modernize its operations in Misamis Oriental.

The upgrade would involve the replacement of pellets of the sintering machine, maintenance (mix of peripheral) equipment and construction of the third blast furnace with a capacity of 1,000 tons a day, according to a statement from the Board of Investments.

Once completed by January 2003, the country's lone producer of steamed iron ore would increase its capacity by 700,000 metric tons a year.

The company would also hire 173 additional workers.

Steaming in part of the process of converting iron ore into steel products.

The company's high quality steamed ore products have been consistently placed among the country's top exports, according to the BOI.

Operating since the mid-'70s, Philippine Steel is registered with the BOI as a pioneer-preferred enterprise as its plant in Misamis is the first and to-date the only one of its kind in the country.

It has also claimed to be the only steam plant in the world detached from an integrated steel mill complex, according to the BOI.

Located within the Phividec Industrial Estate in Misamis Oriental, the company's sinter plant covers 150 hectares land, 25 kilometers north of Cagayan de Oro City.

High grade limestone, a main feed blend in steaming, is delivered from the huge deposits in Gerona-Hernandez town in Bohol and then shipped to the sinter plant in Mindanao.

Once the years, Philippine Steel has continuously received Kawasaki's technical expertise to ensure efficient transfer of technology.

The entire operations of the sinter plant today has since been left to the hands of Filipino engineers and artisans with occasional assistance from the Japanese technical staff.

The local firm usually imports iron from overseas sources, primarily Australia.

The products is then exported to Japan.

RP generates ₱2.5B in forex savings from diesel blend

By Abigail L. Ho

THE GOVERNMENT generated more than P2.5 billion in foreign exchange savings due to the mandatory use of coconut methyl ester (CME) as a diesel blend.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said in a recent speech that the government registered P127 million in foreign exchange savings as the alternative fuel displaced 977,860 liters of diesel.

President Macapagal-Arroyo early last year issued Memorandum Circular No. 56, which required all government agencies to blend at least 5 percent CME with all their diesel requirements.

There are an estimated 20,000 diesel-run government vehicles, excluding those owned by local government units.

If all vehicles comply with the order, about 61,799 kiloliters of CME are expected to be consumed this year, according to the Department of Energy's updated Philippine Energy Plan for 2001-2010.

The government likewise encouraged the sale of CME in gasoline stations nationwide, and this generated another P2.4 billion in savings.

About 95 million liters of diesel were displaced by the 5-percent CME blend.

The use of the blend forms part of the government's efforts to reduce its dependence on imported energy and oil forms by 2010.

The move will at the same time give the country's annual 2.6 million revenue farmers additional income.

Apart from CME, the DOE is also pushing the use of ethanol as a gasoline blend and of compressed natural gas (CNG), initially for the public transport sector.

For CNG, the government has put in place the Natural Gas Vehicle Program for Public Transport (NGVPPT), a seven-year program that aims to have all 50,000 Manila buses running on CNG by 2011.

The price of CME would be pegged at P14.52 per normal table meter (equivalent to a liter) during the program, based on a memorandum of agreement that the DOE signed with the members of the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power Project consortium Shell Philippines Exploration B.V. and Chevron Texaco Malampaya.

This price is almost half that of diesel at current pump price levels of between P32.79 and P37.65 a liter.

DA revives export monitoring body

By Christine A. Saplacan

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture has approved the revival of the export monitoring body that will monitor the country's compliance with global food safety requirements.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap recently gave the go-ahead to reconstitute food safety enforcement mechanisms for the resumption of operations of the National Codex Organization (NCO).

The National Agricultural and Fishery Council (NAFC) pushed for the reactivation of the NCO to bring food exports here the gain prospect of losing its dollar generating agriculture and fishery exports because of tightening global food security regulations.

The NCO has been dormant for four years.

It previously monitored all ordered food safety regulations imposed by international bodies such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The NCO served as an advisory body on food standardization and control issues concerning Codex rules.

Its other functions included preparing the country's official stand on all matters pertaining to Codex standards set by these agencies.

It also lobbied against moves to impose non-tariff barriers to the country's exports of agricultural and fishery products.

The government's export agency members of the ad hoc committee are the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS), National Meat Inspection Commission (NMIC), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippine Coconut Authority, National Food Authority's Food Development Center (FDC), Bureau of Animal Industry, Bureau of Plant Industry and the Bureau of Food and Drugs Administration.

DA officials said earlier that reviving the NCO should hasten the government's efforts to overcome "non-tariff" barriers being imposed by the United States and European Union, which set stringent rules preventing the entry of fruits and processed food products from the Philippines.

NDC sets investment in ethanol project

By Clarissa S. Bedes

THE NATIONAL Development Co., the investment arm of the Department of Trade and Industry, has committed to put increases to support the government's National Fuel Ethanol Program.

The NDC board recently approved the investment agreement between the NDC and Brunswick Philippines Inc., the main proponent of ethanol development in the country, according to NDC general manager Arthur Aquino.

Under the agreement, the NDC would put up 40 percent of the initial capital investment of San Carlos Bio-Energy Inc., which will be formed to develop and operate a mill and distillery complex primarily for ethanol production.

Brunswick would put up the remaining 60 percent.

The integrated facility would be put up in the Agro-Industrial Export Processing Zone in San Carlos, Negros Occidental.

The integrated venture would have a cane milling plant with a through-put capacity of 1,500 metric tons a day of cane and a co-generation power plant with a capacity of about 9 megawatts, of which, 4 megawatts would be sold to the grid.

The facility's ethanol distillery plant will also produce 200,00 liters of bio-ethanol a day, and the CO2 plant will have a production capacity of 17,000 metric tons of alcohol-free carbon dioxide each year for soft drinks manufacturing.

The Arroyo administration is promoting the production and commercial use of ethyl alcohol or ethanol as an alternative fuel in light of continuing increases in world oil prices.

Ethanol is an additive made from sugarcane.

Reports said that if fully promoted, the use of ethanol could reduce the country's dependence on imported fuel by as much as 60 percent.

Trade Secretary Juan E. Santos said that the government's ethanol program was an energy independence strategy identified in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan.

"It also requires government and private financial institutions to provide credit to cooperatives and individual farmers who participate in the production of sugarcane for ethanol," Santos said.

Aquino said the deal with Brunswick does provided that the NDC would put up 50 percent of the equity component of the project's operation phase, while the 75 percent would be financed with debt.

The Negros Planters Group and other investors have signified their interest to also be part of the San Carlos Bio-Energy Inc.

The joint venture between the NDC and Brunswick would supply fuel ethanol to the consumer sector, also key to the distribution grid and oxygen dioxide to the beverage industry.

It would also generate Carbon Emission Reduction Certificates for the Senate-ratified Kyoto Protocol Treaty.

BSP raises GIR target by $1B

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has raised its gross international reserves target this year to $17 billion from $16 billion, taking advantage of much-improved foreign inflows to beef up its war chest against rising oil prices.

In a press briefing Friday, BSP Deputy Governor Nestor A. Espenilla Jr. said the higher build-up of GIR was also aided by better-than-expected foreign exchange inflows, likewise resulting in a possible improvement of the BSP's holdings of payments (BOP) outlook for the year.

The BOP earlier expected its GIR to range at only $15.4-$16 billion this year - the same level reported in 2004 - given the cautious outlook on the global business environment.

The GIR, consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from multilateral institutions and foreign investments, is an indicator of ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy like import bills and debt service.

As the global economy appeared headed for a slowdown this year, the BSP was more conservative in its earlier GIR forecast given the possibility that the country could not rely on export earnings alone to generate foreign exchange inflows.

At end-2004, actual GIR level hit $16.06 billion, up 1.1 percent from end-November but 4.6 percent lower than last year.

The GIR build-up in 2004 and early this year was partly supported by proceeds from fresh public sector loans.

A major contributor this year, however, was the robust inflows from foreign portfolio investments.

Net inflows of "hot money" or foreign portfolio investments surged to $1.62 billion in the first quarter, about 17 times lower than the measly $91.5 million recorded a year ago due to much-improved investor appetite for local stocks.

The three-month portfolio inflows were already more than three-fold- better than the $486.6 million level posted for the whole of 2004.

Tetangco said the inflows were continuing.

In the first week of April alone, he said some $228.7 million more in net inflows came through the banking system.

For the whole of the year, Tetangco said net portfolio inflows would likely hit $2.5-$3 billion, likewise picking up the cudgels of the peso against the US dollar.

"There's potential for further improvement, especially with the strong regional currencies, especially the Japanese yen," Tetangco said.

Meanwhile, Tetangco said the BSP would likely revise upwards its BOP target, on the strength of favorable performance of portfolio investments, as well as the increasing remittances from Overseas Filipino Workers, had improved the BOP outlook.

Fil-Chinese firms look outside Metro Manila

FILIPINO-CHINESE businessmen were looking at investment opportunities outside Metro Manila to counter-act kidnappings and the power and strike situation here raised.

Francis Chua, president of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industries, said the federation was embarking on an investment marketing program that would involve identifying business opportunities all over the country.

The federation plans to come up with a new festival showcasing priority investment projects.

The fair, he said, would complement a similar endeavor of the trade department.

"The plan is to identify and make a list of all investment possibilities within six months. We are mobilizing 178 of our local chambers to find good investment opportunities in their respective areas," said Chua in an interview with reporters.

The local chambers of the federation would also identify tourism spots for promotion and development.

Once the listing is produced, we plan to make a road show that would make a roster for our members to make investment plans. We would take these findings with other investors who may want to invest in the country," said Chua.

He said the federation's plan would help create employment in the countryside.

"This is our contribution to the administration's 10-point program specifically on job-creation, investment promotion and dispersion of economic development in the countryside," added Chua.

Chua said businessmen were encouraged to expand business operations as the incidence of kidnappings has declined.

Only one kidnapping-case was reported this year, that of three-year-old Jennifer Ko in February.

The case tapped Senator Panfilo Lacson and Senator Ralph Recto as co-chairmen.

Once a serious security problem, kidnapping cases have slowed down last year to about once a week on the average from about daily two-to-three ago, according to Chua. Clarissa C. Bautista

BUSINESS

SSS halts decline of pension fund

By Doris C. Dumlao and Michelle V. Rama

THE SOCIAL SECURITY System's investment income, which earlier feared that its pension fund would be depleted by 2010, has arrested the decline in its reserves and stretched the life of its funds by four to six more years.

An SSS official said that with the the pension offered, the pension fund would not implement a hike in contributions.

Gemilo de La Paz, SSS president and chief executive officer, told reporters that the life of its fund is now estimated to last until 2014 to 2020.

Earlier, SSS officials warned that the fund could only last until 2010 if there would be no increase in contributions, like in most benefit countries.

"The fault is the decline[ ] was brought about by reform programs the SSS has instituted," De La Paz said during an interview.

De La Paz attributed the cause to the much improved economic environment and the positive impact of the one percentage hike in members' contribution to 9.4 percent of earnings in early 2003.

The SSS, which serves employees from the private sector, also said in its earnings that it had recovered over P40 billion in back payments from delinquent contributors through its amnesty program for short-term loans.

Under the program, members are allowed to settle their liabilities without having to pay penalties.

According to De La Paz, the SSS is now pushing for an increase in members' contributions, saying that this will inject health into its funds.

Currently, an SSS member offers 9.4 percent of his or her salary as contribution to the pension fund.

Aside from extending the life of its funds, the SSS said its returns program of is allowed it to post a profit last year, reaching a turnaround. It reported that its revenues hit P24 billion in 2004, rebounding from a net loss of P5.9 billion in 2003.

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Drawings of children of prisoners in the Nazi concentration camp in the Czech Republic remind us of the horrors of war and inhumanity

THE CHILDREN in the Terezin Ghetto during a visit paid by a delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Several months later, these children were gassed in Auschwitz.

THE JEWS assembled before leaving for their transport train

Have you heard of Terezin?

By Amanda Ma. Guerrero
Correspondent

NO, I HAVEN'T OF Buchenwald and Auschwitz, yes. But I have not heard of Terezin.

I have not in Ire a medieval town in Czechia (the Czech Republic, having separated from Slovakia) where more than 140,000 Jews—men, women and children—were brought in by the Nazis during World War II (1939-45).

It was a ghetto, a concentration camp with a difference. Arts and letters flourished there—for a time, anyway.

To make Filipinos aware of Terezin and of the Filipino-Czech connection—11 Czech soldiers participated in the defense of Bataan during the Second World War and seven Czechs died during the Death March—the Czech Embassy and the Israeli Embassy have scheduled "Remembering Terezin" at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) on April 28-29.

Czech Ambassador Stanislav Slavicky and Israeli Ambassador Rhodoula Sagi, during a recent press conference at Café Aguinaldo on Roxas City, said a film will be shown, an exhibit will be opened, and a concert will be held during those two days.

Among the other panelists in the press conference were CCP vice president Raoul Josef and Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra director Eugene Castillo.

The exhibit is titled "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" and features the drawings, watercolors and poetry of the children who were interned in the concentration camp along with their parents. There were close to 15,000 children in Terezin, and most of them also met a tragic fate.

"TEREZIN Barracks," by Sonja Weinberger

"After many years, a collection of the children's paintings was discovered," said Slavicky.

Forty of these are displayed in the exhibit, including "Bird and Butterfly" by an unknown artist; "Room with Bunkbed," a watercolor by Erika Taussig; and "Terezin Barracks," a watercolor on mixed paper by Sonja Weinberger.

The first two are rendered in bright, lively colors while the third is in dark tones, giving a hint of torment.

Terezin had a large number of artists, musicians, musicians and scholars. The Nazis allowed them a cultural life, and there were theatrical performances, a library, literary magazines, lectures and painting contests.

"It was a showcase of the Nazi regime, to offset all those reports about Nazi atrocities," declared Sagi.

But the title of war turned against Germany, however, and thrown in the concentration camps, Terezin included, gave more.

Only 17,000 survived Terezin, and only 2,000 survivors are alive today.

"WAR and Butterfly" by an unknown artist

THE GERMAN occupation forces entering Prague on March 15, 1939. Standing between the police officers is a Jewish boy, Edmund Kurtz, who died in an Auschwitz gas chamber on midnight of Sept. 29, 1944.

Tribute to triumph of human spirit

'Remembering Terezin' is also a reminder of the madness and fanaticism of the past

By Antonio C. Hila
Correspondent

TEREZIN, a town in the Czech Republic, was one of several hundreds of thousands but the largest Jewish concentration camp during the Second World War.

Converted into a ghetto, Theresienstadt, it became so overcrowded, resulting in the loss of so many thousands of lives. Though some six million Jews perished, many managed to survive.

As a reminder of the madness and fanaticism of the past, and to celebrate the triumph of the Jewish gallant spirit to survive, "Remembering Terezin" will be held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) April 28-29.

This was announced by Stanislav Slavicky, Czech ambassador to the Philippines, in a press launch at the Sangguniang Panlungsod na Bulwagan St., Makati City Hall Bonifacio Drive, precincts of the monument, hosted the lavish affair included a generous sampling of ecological Czech beer, Pivo Pradaz, exclusively served at Gerppes.

He and the ambassador informed members of the media that "gilten," associated with beer, was the name of a town in the Czech Republic known for a quality brew called Pilsner beer.

LEAVING the railway station at Bohumovice nad Ohri, people who arrived in the transports had to walk the 2.5 km distance to Terezin on foot. Some of the old and sick people did not survive that journey.

ON APRIL 20, 1945, new prisoners began to be brought in Terezin by evacuation transports from other Nazi camps.

"SCALING the Mountains"

"BOOM with Bamboo," by Bi Ba Tsung

"1621 Treasuring Jew"

3-in-1

The celebration will be a three-in-one event, explained Fernando Josef, artistic director of the CCP. It will include an exhibit, "I Never Saw Another Butterfly," at the Little Theater lobby, the screening of the film "Transport from Paradise" at the Tanghalang Manuel Conde on April 28; and the concert "Music from Terezin," at the Main Theater at 8 p.m. on the 29th.

The concert will feature the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, with Eugenio Castillo conducting.

The CCP said Josef, was proud to be part of the event. So was the Embassy of Israel, said ambassador Yehoshua Sagi. Israeli pianist Noam Sivan will be the featured soloist, performing Ullmann's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra.

The concert program will consist of works composed in Terezin by Czech Jewish composers who were detained at the camp. These include Scherzo Trieu, Op.5 by Pavel Haas, and "Sarabande for Strings" by Gideon Klein.

Ullmann, Haas and Klein helped keep life bearable in the concentration camp. They kept themselves busy composing new works, and helped stage performances, thus making the musical life alive. The musical presentations touched the lives of their co-prisoners, and gave them hope for their eventual liberation.

Multi-faceted

Sivan is a thorough musician. Apart from being a concert pianist, he is also a composer, arranger and improviser. His compositions represent a variety of genres, including orchestra music, chamber ensemble, solo instruments, chorus, dance, film and theater.

He has a CV/short doctoral fellowship at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. He was a grand prizewinner in several competitions and recipient of awards such as the Haydn Gleyzes Piano Competition, Jerusalem Duo Competition, Italian Interpreters Chamber Music Prize, Rubin Medna ACP Scholarship in piano and composition, and the Ben Haim Special Award for Israeli Music.

Tel: 0333 123 Inc. 148830.

AMB. STANISLAV
Slavicky of Czech Republic

AMB. YEHOSHUA
Sagi of Israel

CEDL Cadena Alvarez, National Commission for Culture and the Arts executive director, and kabsat-Gen Grace Padaca-gian agreement for a "cultural corridor" between the kabsat-gen provinces, Department of Tourism and Cagayan state universities. The NCCA will provide Kabsat cultural services for the Cagayan people. Magathan Mayor Jose Pungutan suggested the consortium.

Congratulations to all AHEAD students who passed the 2004-2005 Ateneo, La Salle and UP college entrance tests.

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Leaño and Jimenez at West, Saavedra at Mag:net, Austria at CCP

VISUAL ARTS

"RUSH Hour Chaos," by Julio Acerio

"THE CEMENT Gunner," by Carlo Saavedra

'Lilo and Stitch' album tour at Ayala malls

CUTE little Hawaiian girl Lilo and her eternally indestructible lovable alien friend, Stitch, are back spreading the fun and laughter in "Lilo's Summer Adventure," at the Ayala Malls this April and May.

Featuring music from Disney's "Lilo and Stitch Musical Soundtrack Album," "Lilo's Summer Adventure" is especially written and choreographed for Ayala Malls by stage director Freddie Santos, and stars OMI artists Bea Binene as Lilo, Clarissa Sevilleno and Audrey Salmorin alternating as Nani, Gian Ignacio and Tyrone Perez alternating as David, and Emil Sobrevinas Daniel.

SOP Boys Emil and Yosef al. so will groove in tropical-flavored mix from the album like "My Little Grass Shack," "We Make a Rainbow," "Lono Mr. Tender," "Hawaiian Roller Coaster Ride" and many more.

Lilo and the gang will perform at the skating Town Center Activity Center on April 29-May 1, at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.

The adventure gets south to the Ayala Center Cebu Activity Center on May 6-8 at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.

You may also catch the performances at the Market Activity Center on May 13, 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.; the Pavilion Mall New Parking Lot on May 14, 3 p.m.; and the Metropoint 3/F Activity Center on May 15, 6 p.m.

ISMAEL Paricio

BING Giochi

BEN Infante

New haven for artists

By Constantino C. Tejero
Photos by Mitch Mantala

MARIKINA has never been known as a cradle of artists. That's neither puzzling when, in fact, there may be more well-known artists per square meter in this place than in neighboring Pasig town, say, Angono, where art is supposed to be a cottage industry.

Of older artists, Angono has only Jose Blanco, Antipolo has only Inno Sarmiento and Nemiranda, while Marikina has Benny Bogaisim, Mario Parial, Cris Cruz, Lydia Velasco, Abdulmuin Imam.

To correct that impression, a group of artists formed Bulay Marikina in January with the primary aim of promoting Marikina as an artists' village, like Angono.

"Isang taunan, mas marami ang iba sa artists ang mga Marikina dayan dagsaan upang... mas maraming makabili [sa] gusto nilang [mga] likha ng mga taga-Marikina," says watercolorist Roland Santos, the group's vice president.

Today Marikina has some 30 members. The core group includes its president Velasco, Santos, Bogaisim, Cruz, Ben Infante, Andy Ureg, Melencio Sapno, Shiela Tiangco, Honey Bansal, Fred Escobahan.

They have found a permanent venue for their sessions in Marikina Hotel, where they meet every Friday at 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Recently they held a summer art workshop there.

They also held exhibitions at the hotel lobby, with one on the subject of flowers ongoing until next week. Next month they're putting up another show on the theme of women on canvas.

ROLAND Santos

GRACE Ng

BY ANDY Ureg

ROLAND Santos, Andy Pereta, Bong Dejan, Andy Ureg, Tom Urea, Lulu Gabriel, (second row) George Ng, Honey Bansal, Ben Infante, Benny Bogaisim, Ennis Paricio, Melvyn Martin, Shiela Tiangco, Bing Giochi, Mon Cuttaia.

Publicity and inspiration

Through the local government, it enjoys live on artists in terms of venue for their art and exhibition, Santos says they still can't count on it for publicity and marketing.

"Our main problem is marketing," he continues. "Ako, sarisaring alam ay among Marikeninos. Art is not at the highest level with them. A painting at P5,000 sumasandaan-to-sa ako."

Clearly this new art group needs all the support it can get. So when an invitation to an art activity was extended by Cala Penitsson, Inc. last week, 14 from the group were only too eager to go. The venue was the 23-ha Corona Grande subdivision project in Puerto Azul in Ternate, Cavite.

The idea was to hold on-the-spot painting sessions in the lichen (sea) community, portraying its views of sea and forested hills, ongoing resort works, bird species, flora and fauna, it was meant to be symbiosis: The artists would draw inspiration from the place, and Corona Grande would get publicity through art.

In early afternoon, after crawling around from one valley to another, from clubhouse to golf course, from construction to recluse, the artists took their choices of vistas, angles and perspectives and started framing the natural world small scenes.

Early the following morning, some still rushed to the porch facing the bay to catch the quality of light at sunrise.

The resultant pieces are interesting in the variety of subjects and styles or even in the differences in interpretations of the same subjects. The preferred subject is the sea, then the ocean-and-cabanas.

Some, however, focus on the leaves and flowers abounding in the nature reserve—coconut plants, bird-of-paradise, ginger, palmas, kalachuchi.

Still life and landscape

The preferred medium is pastel. It was just practical as it was the easiest to carry around in such a trip as this. George Ng started a piece in oil but didn't finish it, and came up with a lovely mono-chromatic watercolor seascape instead.

Luis Gabriel, who also did watercolor pieces, said the tonic in the area was salty so it had a flat effect in the rendering of watercolors. We don't know if both used bottled mineral water instead.

There is an abstract piece, except for Wou Carbero's luminous washes melting into monochromatics. Most of the pieces are impressionistic in their treatment of landscape, as is only natural.

He notice that only the men do landscape, while the women prefer still life and genre painting. Why are there only a few female landscapers? Is it innate in female nature? Is it natural to male temperament?

Anyways, the genre portrait is still paced by Bogaisim, the floral still life as watercolor by Ocampo, and the foliage in oil pastel by Bansal are among the loveliest on display...and they can certainly hold their own side by side with the men's landscapes and seascapes.

The men may have found an entire universe in the link of horizon and shore, water and sky, but the women prefer to see the world in a grain of sand.

Someone from Cala Penitsson, Inc. says they're planning to hold an exhibit of these artworks. Hospitality and marketing for both the Bay Marikina and Corona Grande are halfway solved. (God works in mysterious ways.)

HONEY Bansal

HONEY Bansal

BENNY Bogaisim

Building memorializes Malang's greatest love

HOME for original Filipino artworks

THE BUILDING used to be called Mabolo, a play on the name of artist Malang's late wife, Mary Gamos. It housed the family-run West Gallery and Antiques Philippines, as well as the studios of Malang and three of his sons, Eden and Hermenigildo, and daughter-in-law Wona.

Malang and Mary managed the artists' space since the 1970s. When she died, Malang sought to consecrate it.

Malang also envisioned separate exhibition spaces for sculpture, drawings and art prints.

On March 1, Mary's diamond birthday anniversary, the new West Annex Arcade in Quezon City opened with an aptly titled exhibit, "Tribute to Mary."

Malang presented his newest collection as the newly refurbished West Gallery, now as the second floor.

Among Malang's favorite subjects have been women, and he couldn't be more fulfilled after delivering this latest exhibit. Lend the whole art crowd in the love of his life.

Across West Gallery are the sculpture rooms and large rest Philippines.

Other artists featured in the inaugural exhibit were BenCab, Arnie Bhagwanani-Bio, Artemio Luz, Ramon Orlina and Eduardo Castrillo.

Architectural consultants of Juan Alcaraz, Jose Antonio, Jose and Jordan Mendoza, Dan Rafallo and Reggie Reyes were also on view.

On hand to the opening were Quezon City Rep. Simeon Crisologo and his wife, UP Vargas Museum's Ani Labrador, columnist Ninal Cruz, sculptor Ramon Orlina, painter Dioscoro Perez, Dra. and Dr. Rodriguez, Au-

HEAD Ramon Arcade lobby

rora Go, Juan T. Gatbonton, artist and art critic Cid Reyes and Finale Art File's Vita Sarreal and Sylvia Gamos.

Conversation is ongoing on the other floors, which will house artist studios and workshop areas.

A portion of the area will be leased to other craftsmen in line with the arcade's concept to become a home for original Filipino works of art.

Mary Gamos Arcade is at 68 West Ave., Quezon City. Call 4119221 or 4110336.

"NATURE'S Rock at Puerto Galera," by Rafael Cusi Jr.

"NEAR Park Dedekarten," by Cusi

"MINDORO Scene," by Cusi

"BALAJAN Scene," by Cusi

Drawings from life

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

THE MOTION that drawing is lost in executing close paintings is rather inaccurate and unpleasantly. It can be easily debunked, considering the stringent standards artists unfortunately apply when executing.

A staunch disciple of drawing is Rafael Cusi Jr., a master of watercolor. In his long and outstanding practice, Cusi has pushed drawing well beyond its boundaries, pursuing it not merely as a respite from his painting. And all these years, he has collected well over 500 black-and-white drawings, mainly in India ink and charcoal on paper.

To assess his collection in several venues across the country, all Cusi had to do was take the drawings, some dating back to the '70s, out of the drawer and have them framed.

The artist has consistently explored the theme of nature's bounty with the most expressive means at his command. It is hardly surprising then the collection boasts of powerfully alluring images of tropical beauty—waterlogged beaches and receding palms beneath lush wild vegetation, still life, images that highlight the elemental light and shadow, quintessential black and white.

Worthy

Equally prominent are the nudes, mainly female figures, from famous celebrities to anonymous models. While Cusi may resolutely confess he is no pure-blue portraitist, the nudes are worthy of a second or third attention.

Cusi is clearly more enamored with the body's sculptural qualities, highlighting the well-articulated sculptural contours and tracing a passionately toxic through gestures and the resultant animated poses.

The nudes are a virtual gallery of human emotions, betrayed in bodies standing, sitting, reclining, in subdued or assertive positions, several faces partly shown, totally wrapped or deliberately concealed. The artist avoids making detours, recording the easy way out by repeating standard imagery that other artists, benefits very hard to do.

Though several nude drawings simply focus on the physical form, others are, in point and with totally muted backgrounds, delineated in a three-dimensional mode, the play of contrasts creating depth, volume and a sense of dynamism.

Some scenes are inspired by the artist's frequent jaunts abroad, his sense of wanderlust satiated with sketches of palaces and cloisters, arches, promenades, plazas and other places. Cusi's style is discernible even in sketches that resemble pictures with monumentality, like those of the cavernous edifices in Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Intuitive

Born in Bangalore, Oriental Mindoro, and educated at the Philippine Women's University, where he earned his degree in Fine Arts and won an outstanding student, Cusi has an intuitive style reflecting contemporary sensibility.

"BALAJAN," by Salvador Ching

This is evidence in his charming exhibit, on this col, herein amply proven, reveals a masterly control of both medium and its innate potential to bring out the salient aspects of his subject.

The drawings possess a special quality that sets him apart. With his unyielding imagination, a robust and expressive style, the drawings combine life and art, animated by his pursuit of pleasures, fantastic and divine. Cusi's art strikes deep into the realm of the imagination.

The pre-departure show of Cusi, Fidel Santiaguo Lynnhaven of the Art Association of the Philippines) and Bob Conversan (Saturday Group president) at the Renaissance Art Gallery ends today.

The show, "Lebenszeit Kalebis," will go on a tour in Berlin, Germany (Hotel Intercontinental, May 2-31); Belgium (Rudolph Wawelaers, Brugge, May 12-14); Paris, France (Philippine Embassy, May 16-17); Luxembourg (May 18-20); and The Hague, Netherlands (May 21-23).

Closing

Meanwhile, "Pasyal" at The Big & Small Art Co., SM Megamall, showcasing the recent works in pencil and acrylic of Salvador Ching, a much younger artist who is also fascinated with drawing, ends today.

Ching describes the show as a self-interpretation of life, its pains and struggles and dreams, an admixture montage of images containing symbolic objects and subconscious fig ures culled from his dreams and memories.

A performance artist, Ching had his flowing hair shaved by friend Sherwin Ramon during the opening of the show. Clumps of his cut-and hair were dangled from a rope as part of the merging process. He inscribed a statement in Filipino on a plastic sheet to reiterate his chosen theme, which approximates the demolition ritual.

Ching's show included his entry in the mixed-media category of the last AAP Annual. Called "Buhlang," an installation in made of pili nuts and giant gaga fibers fashioned into a cocoon.

The other pieces, also in browns and beiges, are introspective in mood, muted in composition, a deeply psychological outpouring by an artist moving closer to his artistic nirvana.

E-mail the author at ginodorm@yahoo.com.

Cusi has pushed drawing well beyond its boundaries, pursuing it not merely as a respite from his painting

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Sa Philam Plans, Panalong ka. Noon, ngayon at sa hinaharap.

Yao Ming's tall tale

"Yao: A Life in Two Worlds"
By Yao Ming with Ric Bucher
Miramax Books (Hyperion)
New York
2004, 288 pages

By Rudi S. De Vera

WHO knew that someone so tall could be so funny?

People around the world, even those uninterested in basketball, know about how the 7'6" Chinese center Yao Ming emerged the National Basketball Association (NBA) upon his arrival in 2002. But watching him man the point for the Houston Rockets, one would get the idea that Yao, who arrived in the United States with a very limited English vocabulary, was a shy and hesitant individual, the very picture of the inexorable Oriental, albeit a voyeuristic one.

Guess again. Yao is apparently a very funny and opinionated person, judging from his autobiography "Yao: A Life in Two Worlds."

The NBA star's book, 'Yao: A Life in Two Worlds,' is a surprisingly humorous and thoughtful autobiography

Though co-authored and obviously meticulously crafted by ESPN The Magazine scribe Rich Bucher, "Life" inexorably triumphants Yao's quirky humor and his quiet intellect unto the printed page.

Unique challenge

And as Yao ain't the stiff he initially appears to be, Yao also isn't the slow-moving behemoth of NBA lore. With his massive legs, soft hands and surprising coordination, Yao presents a unique challenge for defenders—and a front wall for players trying to drive on him.

"Life" also isn't a straightforward autobiography as Yao was the very most expert. As much of "Life" may feature Yao speaking in first person, but a substantial portion is taken up by a large supporting cast quoted a la oral history.

Yao isn't the first Chinese player in the NBA: Wang Zhi Zhi and Mengke Bateer preceded him. In the book, the intricate process by which Yao is finally brought to the NBA is chronicled in detail that, with Yao's alternating between determination and frustration, it plays out a bit like "Free Willy" in black high tops. There are times it honestly feels like Yao would never make his NBA debut due to his competent bonfire and unexpected robust clothes.

By the time Yao begins playing for the Rockets, the big man more adept to a whole new language, a whole new speed of play and a whole new status as the foremost star of the NBA's most popular players, culminating in his selection as a starter over Chris Lee Magazine Luke Mangabi 179And in the NBA All-Star Game.

Yao has to develop as an athlete, grow as a person and settle into his role as the game's foremost international ambassador. This internal odyssey is charted in "Life"—with surprising results.

Contrary to his square-jawed, flattop appearance, Yao has a natural, easygoing comic touch. Of former Slugger Earl Stapleton, reportedly the NBA's shortest player, Yao says "the first time I played against Stapleton, who is 5'5", I thought a fan had run out of the stands to try and take the ball from me."

Of shark-haired rounds man Ben Wallace of the Detroit Pistons, Yao opines: "He was so scary, he made me forget how to play basketball."

There are humorous occurrences in Yao's life that seem too strange to be true, but they are. Among these weird events are Yao's unconscious with a bizarre song made to his name, his quest to learn how to drive and his various misadventures involving insurance.

Engaging, thoughtful

Yao proves himself to be quite an engaging and thoughtful author, particularly when he decides to open up. There is actually an entire chapter on his long-time girlfriend Ye Li, also a Chinese national player and the reason Yao wears a red band around his left wrist. Beyond that, he says he is close to his parents. These recollections exude an unexpected gentleness, warmth and shyness.

But "Life" also feels somewhat stunted and stiff at parts. When Yao speaks on the Communist structure of life in China, he speaks passionately and intelligently, but also in a rather prissy manner, particularly compared to how romper and candid he is in the other parts of "Life."

Though there are colored photographs, the provided visuals simply aren't enough to properly complement the text.

Perhaps the most crucial consideration involves the scope of "Life" itself. Despite his considerable achievements, Yao is still quite young by athletic standards (at 24, he is currently in his third season) and "Life" really a sounding a beginning more than anything else.

Despite all that, "Yao Ming: A Life in Two Worlds" is a surprisingly agile read, full of little observations and big ideas that make it a worthwhile read. No tall tale, it is a testament to the unique life of a unique NBA superstar and not a ninety biography by a long shot.

Available in hardcover from selected National Book Store branches and Power Books.

Watching for wristwatches at National Bookstore

"THE WRISTWATCH Annual 2005" is a definitive book for the mechanical wristwatches collector. Following the success of last year's book, this new annual compilation features over 1,500 of the world's most luxurious wristwatches, complete with color photographs and specifications for each watch. This is a must-have for every enthusiasts alike.

Available at selected National Book Store outlets.

"RED Sky through My Window"

"SILHOUETTE"

Known for big works, the abstract artist underwhelms and gets cozy in a new show

"MOON Hiding"

"SUNSET and Blue Sky"

Lito Carating gets friendly

From page C6

became a popular hobby as well as taken on mythological creatures.

At an upcoming exhibit in Cesar Cafe and Restaurant, organized with Hiraya Gallery, he continues with the style he began five years ago: overlapping layers of metallic acrylic colors executed in relaxing brushed and swirled or hatched strokes. This look was inspired by a detail from works he showed in the Spanish cities of Madrid and Valencia.

"I got the inspiration after seeing the landscape of Spain from the plane," he says.

Opera singer

Unknown to many, low-profile Carating was a full-time opera singer before commencing on being an artist.

"I wanted to satisfy the exhibitionist in me by performing in public," he jokes.

He stopped singing when his twin sister passed away in 1991. "I owe her my lifestyle. Brother-in-law made an exist, who was in a coma, listen to classical music to help her heal. Since then, I've identified classical music and operas with the passing of my twin."

These days, he says, "music is confined to my painting."

Carating, who has been painting for more than 30 years, says he still remembers the challenges of a young artist. He begins work at 5:30 a.m., listening to music from an old transistor radio. He paints the whole day.

"It's a complete ceremony just to bring out my right and wild pigments," he says.

"I see it as my separate series," he declares. "I think, for starters, as long as you know the technique already, you can do it with eyes closed. But this is not mass-producing. I'm just very sure about my work."

"Small Pieces At Once" opens on April 27 and continues for three weeks. Cesar Cafe and Restaurant is at 2 L. Guevarra St. in Cubao. (STAFF)

Leaño and . . .

From page C1

an Island-Rice Affair: A period (1930s-1960s) martial law (1972-1981) and post-EDSA (1986-2005). The exhibit can be viewed until June 12 at Ayala Museum, Makati. Call 7577117 to 21.

THE ON AIR Gallery presents Jordan Mendoza's "El cuerpo como escultura" at SM Megamall. They are figures mostly from classical theories, which the artist uses to express what he calls "the strength, force, grace and beauty of the dynamic human form."

ISSA ARTWORKS conducts a summer art workshop for 9 years old and above. On May 16, it will be held at Casa del Nino Montessori School, Paseo Complex, San Pedro, Laguna. Until May 31, it will be at Prime International Language Center & Tutorial Services, Waterfly Plaza, Biñan, Laguna. Sam Gui, a member of Art Association of the Philippines, conducts the workshops. Call 0905-2352345.

THE ENTERPRISE Cecilia Guevara Jose Garcia's "The Colors of Summer" until May 5 at Art Hub 2 L. Tower 2, Enterprise Building, cor. Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas, Makati. The exhibit features creations that capture the spirit of the season. The theme of each artwork ranges from interflying to surfing. Call 8917 3996 or 0917-7939020.

"ORANGE Sky"

Lito Carating gets friendly

By James P. Ong
Contributor

NOBODY'S "Lito" Carating isn't exactly known for doing small art pieces. His huge canvas paintings—the biggest he's done measured 6 ft x 25 ft—are displayed in the country's most beautiful modern homes and typically composed of several panels; you couldn't fit one small here even if you tried.

So it's surprising that, for the first time in his career, this leading abstract artist is finally exhibiting small, young collectors-friendly pieces done on paper. The gig follows a mid-size group exhibit in Singapore's relative art space, Artforum Gallery, where he was joined by Gus Albor, Nonoy Viduya and Roy Villavicencio.

Carating's frequently changing palette has always left the art world in awe of him. His themes have also been varied, he painted an underwater series years before scuba diving

LATER